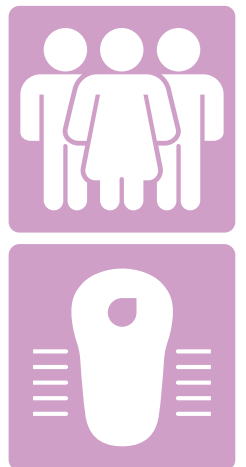




Proceedings:
Roundtable Discussion

South Asian Exchange on Public Sanitation

20 July 2023



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Acronyms

ASCI	Administrative Staff College of India
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
BOT	Build-Operate-Transfer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COO	Chief Operation Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CTO	Chief Technology Officer
DNCC	Dhaka North City Cooperation
DSCC	Dhaka South City Cooperation
DSK	Dushtha Shasthya Kendra
EPC	Engineering, Procurement and Construction Model
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
ICCC	Integrated Command and Control Center
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INGO	International NGO
IT	Information Technology
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LGD	Local Government Division
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SAS	Statistical Analysis Software
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
WIH	WASH Innovation Hub

Preface

This proceedings document is based on a roundtable titled “South Asian Exchange on Public Sanitation”, which was jointly organised by WaterAid South Asia Regional Office and Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) at Lakeshore Hotel, Gulshan, on 20 July 2023. WaterAid South Asia Regional Office and ASCI organised a regional exposure visit on public toilets to facilitate knowledge sharing among representatives of the WASH sector in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India, along with WaterAid India, Bangladesh and Nepal, and with the participation of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City Office, Local Government Division of Bangladesh, and Dhaka City Corporation. Following the completion of the visits in the three countries, delegates and high-level stakeholders convened in Dhaka at the event with the objective of having a roundtable discussion to share their experience and insights. The programme also included an exhibition on recent innovations in public sanitation.





Executive Summary

South Asia is currently facing multiple challenges related to public sanitation due to increased urbanization. The South Asian Exchange on Public Sanitation was organised by WaterAid South Asia Regional team in collaboration with Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), WaterAid India, WaterAid Nepal and WaterAid Bangladesh, to discuss the best practices and areas of collaboration on public sanitation initiatives by India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. The regional learning-sharing initiative aims to disseminate best practices, ideas, and innovations, focusing on operations, technology, and female accessibility.

The group of high-level delegates and stakeholders from the participating countries discussed their experiences from the visits to public toilets in the three countries, the urgency to improve public toilets in the South Asian region and the ways in which public toilets can be efficiently operated and managed. Further topics included the integration of best models including business models, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and partnership modalities in the interventions to improve public sanitation.

This proceedings document discusses the significance of public sanitation in South Asia and highlights the accomplishments and

Executive Summary

challenges faced by various countries in the region. South Asian countries share cultural norms related to public toilets, allowing for cross-country learning. The Sulabh Shauchalaya toilet model, adopted in Bangladesh from India, is an example. However, leasing public toilets to the private sector can compromise service quality. Customizing models and practices to each country's context is essential.

To promote female public toilet usage, innovative solutions are vital. Nepal and India are encouraging markets, parks, and gas stations to provide public toilets while ensuring safety. Bangladesh extends this agenda to schools. The document details a two-phase learning and exchange visit covering India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Noteworthy practices include self-help groups managing toilets, sensor-based monitoring and sustainable technologies like water recycling. The report also underlines the importance of female-friendly toilets and emphasizes the need for PPP models and proper maintenance.

Successful initiatives in Nepal and India, along with public-private collaborations, have improved public sanitation. The late Mayor Anisul Huq's efforts in Dhaka, succeeded by Mayor Atiqul Islam, have led to advancements, setting a model for others. The report suggests that promoting female workforce retention is connected to the functionalities of female-friendly toilets. The PPP model's success relies on revenue generation, advertisement integration and hygiene maintenance.

The document underscores the need for enhancing public convenience, engaging citizens, and focusing on behavioral change. South Asia has made significant progress in public toilet improvements, and these facilities should be a fundamental right of citizens. The document calls for innovative solutions, partnerships and continuous learning through initiatives like the South Asian Exchange on Public Sanitation.

In conclusion, the document highlights the ongoing efforts to enhance public sanitation in South Asia, emphasizing the importance of innovative practices, partnerships, and sustainable models for operation and maintenance. It outlines key strategies and case studies that can guide future initiatives, ultimately contributing to improved public sanitation and inclusive communities in the region.

Overview

Nearly home to 1.88 billion people, the region of South Asia is facing significant challenges related to health, hygiene and sanitation. Rapid urbanisation driven by economic evolution has strained the capacity of systems, depleted facilities, and exacerbated public sanitation needs, compounded by limited space and inadequate maintenance. Consequently, public sanitation and environmental health have emerged as formidable challenges for authorities, particularly concerning services around public toilets in the cities of this region. Establishment, financing, operations and maintenance, and monitoring have always been a challenge.

The city authorities of this region face multiple challenges in relation to public toilets. ActionAid in Bangladesh identified 90 per cent¹ of public toilets in Dhaka were not usable in 2019. Similar type of study in India showed that 35 per cent of 229 surveyed public toilets in Delhi did not have a separate section for women. The study further stated that 53 per cent of women's toilets had no running water². Kathmandu's tales resonate with Dhaka and Delhi, it faces major crisis with space for adequate and clean public toilets. There are only 35 public toilets in Kathmandu Metropolitan City and most of them are unusable.

While these scenarios remain a burning concern for city authorities, the region has also been the bedrock of impressive innovations, technology and practices in finding solutions to this crisis through diverse partnerships with NGOs & INGOs, CSOs, private sector, municipal and city authorities, and state and federal ministries. Some of these innovations include Sulabh Shauchalaya Movement, gender neutral toilets and stainless, self-cleaning automated toilets called Garv Toilets across India, Loo Café in Hyderabad, Garimah Grih in Delhi, TI bus toilets in Pune, Nirmal Public Sanitation Complex in Bengaluru, Pause rest rooms in Mumbai-Goa highway, toilets on wheels and inclusive public toilets for male, female and LGBT community in Nepal, and public toilets with café and rain water harvesting system at the top in Bangladesh.

The government stakeholders including city authorities, municipalities, and the ministries of India, Nepal and Bangladesh have adopted different models of public sanitation over the years and demonstrated a high level of interest in mitigating this crisis. However, there is much scope for cross-country learning and sharing, of best practices, experiences, ideas, and insights on service delivery for the citizen's rights to effective provision of public sanitation, to take place within the region.

¹Sanitation refreshing solution for a dirty problem | Dhaka Tribune

²No Toilets, No Locks, No Soap: Why Indian Women Prefer To Hold Pee Than Use Public Toilets (indiatimes.com)



Innovation Exhibition Corner

The “Innovation Exhibition Corner” showcased recent innovations in Public Sanitation by Bangladesh, India and Nepal. This segment of the event was facilitated by Dr. M Snehalatha, from ASCI, briefing on the need for innovations and the different innovations and practices displayed at the exhibition to improve public sanitation in South Asia. Mr. B M Zahidul Islam of WaterAid Bangladesh presented O&M Models and Social Enterprise from Bangladesh; Ms. Dindigala Jyothsna Devi and Sasi Priya of ASCI, and Mr. Desu Sunil Manohar of Wenalytics showcased Social Audit and Innovations posters from India, and Mr. Sarbagya Shrestha of WaterAid Nepal, showcased the poster of Bus Tour Awareness Campaign from Nepal.

Proceedings of the Roundtable

Welcome and Context Setting Message

By **Dr. Md. Khairul Islam**
Regional Director, South Asia, WaterAid



The work that has been done by the late Mayor Anisul Huq has been monumental in creating the momentum for improved public sanitation in Dhaka. The baton has been handed over to a very capable successor, the Honourable Mayor Atiqul Islam. I would also like to commend the first-class toilets built in Nepal by my colleague Prakash Amatya. He was the person who gave me the idea of this regional learning sharing session before passing away suddenly from an untimely death.

We realised that the countries in South Asia share similar culture and practices related to public toilets which means that

The countries in South Asia share similar culture and practices related to public toilets which means that the countries can share each other's practices including technological innovations, management, and operation and maintenance.

the countries can share each other's practices, including technological innovations, management, and operation and maintenance. Upon sharing, the practices can be customised according to the country's context. For example, during the time of Mayor Mohammad Hanif, a team from Bangladesh visited India and saw the Sulabh Shauchalaya toilet model, which was being run by one of the pioneering NGOs in India. The customised versions of the model are still being adopted by a number of municipalities and the City Corporations and they lease out public toilet to the private sector. We have seen that while leasing out reduces the burden on the Dhaka City Corporation or other municipalities, the quality of the public

toilet services gets compromised. Bangladesh then looked at other models in South Asia including India and Nepal. We are very grateful that both Mayor Anisul Huq and his capable successor Mayor Atiqul Islam have included public sanitation in their election agenda. It is also a major component of their actual work and they have driven the agenda in such a way that public toilet is a live issue in City Corporation and Bangladesh's development discourse. There are still many challenges such as there is less than 25% use of public toilets by females. We are trying to promote the use of public toilets by females by letting women feel safe and secure by establishing women-friendly services.

Because of the space problem, we cannot get empty spaces to build new public toilets. So, we need to think about innovative solutions. We have seen in Nepal and India that apart from the City Corporation or Municipality-built public toilets, the countries are promoting the markets to keep public toilets clean. The countries are encouraging parks and gas stations to open toilets for public use while maintaining safety and security. This is about encouraging other stakeholders to share the responsibilities of public sanitation. Now City Corporations in Bangladesh have expanded the agenda in such a way that other public utilities and facilities, whether they belong to the private or public sector, offer similar kinds of services. For example, Lalbagh Fort has set inclusive toilets for the school children when they come and visit. This system was not there ten years ago. Slowly and gradually this agenda of public toilet provision and accessibility is getting more popular in Bangladesh.

Some of the leaders like our current mayor and the mayors who have come here today from India and Nepal are setting certain interesting examples. The concept

of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is not working efficiently for certain diplomatic reasons. But this kind of Track II diplomacy or arrangement through a regional exchange with a few like-minded countries like India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, can allow us to learn from each other. The delegates can also share their interesting practices. In this exchange program, participants had the chance to see great examples of public toilet in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Examples include how technology has been used for real time monitoring, income generation, and saving water, etc. There were also several issues that could be highlighted including how operation maintenance can be improved, and citizen can be engaged in making the public toilet management committees accountable.

Therefore, the purpose of regional learning sharing initiative is to share the best practices, ideas, technological innovations, and practices, particularly in terms of operations and maintenance, harnessing Information Technology (IT), and keeping the agenda alive for welcoming ideas on better and more use of public toilets by females. I would like to thank the delegates, especially the Mayors from India, Nepal, and from different parts of Bangladesh for taking part in this regional exchange. I thank ASCI especially Prof. Chary for conceptualizing, hosting and organizing the visit in India. I would also like to thank and express my gratefulness to our Chief Guest, the Honorable Mayor Atiqul Islam, for giving us his valuable time and, more importantly, taking the agenda of public sanitation seriously since the time of his election.

Presentation from ASCI – Public Toilet Exchange and Learning

By **Dr. M. Snehalatha**
Associate Professor, ASCI

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The purpose of this learning and exchange visit of public toilets in South Asia was to identify the innovations and best practices that can be shared and replicated within South Asian countries. It was completed in two phases: In phase 1, participants from Nepal and Bangladesh visited India from 28th to 31st March 2023 covering four cities; and in phase 2, participants from India and Bangladesh visited Nepal from 15th to 18th July 2023 covering two cities, and all three countries visited the public toilets in Bangladesh from 19th to 21st July 2023. The visits in India covered mobile toilets, operate and transfer models, SHE toilets and business models such as LooCafe in Hyderabad (India). Participants observed the public toilets being maintained by Self Help Groups,

Transgender communities and the sensor based real time monitoring of the Public toilets in Warangal (India). The Pink Toilets and Garima Grih maintained by the CSR unit of PVR cinemas in Delhi witnessed on how the public toilets can be a learning and recreation centres for imparting the skills in tailoring, computers etc. for women and children, public toilets near Tollygunge metro station (India), and in Golf Garden in Kolkata (India) emphasised the need for aesthetics and the local residents' ownership in overseeing the public toilet maintenance. The toilets at Gongabu bus park and the Aerosan Hub public toilets in Kathmandu (Nepal) highlighted technologies for sustainability, such as the treatment of grey and black water, reuse of treated water, and rain water harvesting. Similarly, in Kamalapur railway station in Dhaka (Bangladesh) the rainwater is being harvested with a unique design. During these visits, the teams also had discussions with various stakeholders including representatives from government entities, civil society organisations, alliances and private enterprises. Furthermore, ASCI presented its future work on building aspirational public toilets by incorporating various parameters apart from focusing on disseminating the successful practices of operational maintenance by transgender and women community groups, real-time ICT based toilet monitoring system, civil society engagement by conducting social audits using citizen scorecards, and WASH Innovation Hub (WIH) for incubating new innovators and smart public toilets.

Thematic Discussions

Ms. Gundu Sudha Rani
Mayor, Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation, Telangana, India

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Warangal is the second largest city in the newly formed state of Telangana, India, spread over an area of 411 square kilometers, with an estimated population of 1 million people. The city does not have underground sewerage systems and in 2017, it was declared as open defecation free by Quality Control Council of India. It was the first city in India to construct 229 public sanitation facilities with 1,100 seats as per the population and seating ratios prescribed by Govt of India covering urban poor settlements and marketplaces. The public toilets are constructed over the entire city: 45 public toilets on PPP mode, 96 public toilets on Engineering, Procurement and Construction Model (EPC) mode, 4 SHE toilets, 8 community toilets, 2

This part of the event was steered by Mr. Shyamal Dutta, General Secretary, National Press Club, Bangladesh. The participants including delegates from India, Nepal and Bangladesh discussed topics around public toilets and sanitation such as the current state of public toilets, innovation and monitoring, operation and maintenance, and public-private partnership.

mobile toilets and 70 toilets in fuel stations. Now Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode under Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model is one of the successful models in the entire state. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and training are provided to the operators. Performance based maintenance contracts are issued by the municipality and the budgets are clearly marked.

Every year Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation spends INR 90 lacs on sanitation. The toilets are maintained by Self Help Groups and another one by the transgenders. The gender audit is done for all existing public toilets which led to the introduction of SHE toilets, first to be introduced in India and scaled up to entire state. We also have separate toilets for men and women. The SHE toilets are for and maintained entirely by women. The municipality is maintaining the norms for persons with disabilities. For women, sanitary napkins, sanitary vending machines, incinerators, and mirrors are provided. Warangal is one of the first cities with public toilets with ICT monitoring systems. Recently we introduced Integrated Command and Control Center (ICCC) and with that, we are planning to link all public toilets. Warangal formalised civil society engagements for advancing accountability, leading to better service delivery. Social audits of public toilets are also being conducted by the civil society groups, and reports are shared with the government requesting improvement of facilities.

Warangal has always been a testing ground for several innovations in sanitation such as sensor-based monitoring, bio-digesters, and mechanisms for effective cleaning of septic tanks. The municipality has a task force with a gender sub-committee in which there is 50% involvement of women and transgenders. We have 150 kilo-litres per day (KLD) FSTP and 23 trucks to desludge septic tanks, 30% maintained by women. Each truck's capacity is 50,000 litres. We have a task force with strong diversity and are doing a lot of innovative work with civil society groups.

Mr. Devendra Kumar Jha
 Project Chief, Federal Water Supply & Sewerage Management Project, Nepal



If we look at Nepal's context, the basic water supply is 97%. A Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan was formulated in 2011 that brought all the political parties together to improve sanitation and maintain the beauty of Nepal. Through this plan, it was identified that there were not enough toilets in the households. When you calculate the households and number of toilets, the public investment was equal to one fiscal year budget of Nepal. Nepal is doing well to maintain sanitation according to UNICEF and other expert

reports. Also, only 3% of the population in Nepal is left to be provided with basic water coverage. The public toilet in Kamlapur railway station is very modern and can be adapted as a model. In Kathmandu, the public toilet constructed in Swoyambhunath Temple can be a good example of how other countries in South Asia can build their public toilets. It has been built following the principles of circular economy with the objective of 'zero waste' as it converts the biowaste to biogas, which is a source of renewable energy, and non-chemical fertiliser, and grey water is treated and recycled for toilet flushing.

Mr. Md. Rasel Sabrin
 Chief Estate Officer, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), GoB



Upon discussions with key stakeholders, it was found that the Nepal government is profoundly serious about improving the conditions of their public toilets. In Bangladesh, the city corporation is run by the law enacted in 2009. In this law, 41 sections focus on sanitation and public toilets. The Honorable Mayor, Dhaka South City Corporation, Barrister Sheikh Fazle Nur Tapash, started to build public toilets

in all the 75 wards of Dhaka South City Corporation, with construction completed in 63 wards. However, not all the public toilets in Bangladesh are transgender, women and disabled friendly, so there is scope for improvement.

Mr. Desu Sunil Manohar
Co-Founder/Chief Technology Officer
(CTO), Wenalytics IoT Solutions Pvt Ltd



When we want to construct something, building it is only 10% of the work. We need the right data to build systems. Each public toilet must be monitored at all levels of society. We need to analyse certain data such as the male to female ratio, ensure the public toilet does not have an unpleasant smell, is clean and hygienic and monitor the cleaning cycles and every other aspect to create actionable insights. A public toilet is a necessity for every citizen and is to be built regardless of the people using them. Wenalytics is providing solutions for all these by introducing sensor based real time monitoring systems at public toilets.

Dr. Dibalok Singha
Executive Director, Dushtha
Shasthya Kendra (DSK)



In Bangladesh, we need to identify how to integrate IT based monitoring in public toilets. DSK has built 20 public toilets across Dhaka, Chattogram and Khulna. From DSK's experience, there are a few things that need to be considered. Firstly, there is not enough government space in Dhaka to install an adequate number of public toilets. Next, for management of public toilets, we should engage communities themselves and different stakeholders to maintain the public toilets



For management of public toilets, we should engage communities themselves and different stakeholders to maintain the public toilets properly.

properly. There should also be separate male and female toilets. In all toilets maintained by DSK, we have separate male and female sections. We also need to leverage IT based monitoring system for use in public toilets in Bangladesh. There are several IT service providers across Bangladesh and approximately 100 million mobile users. Getting access to technology from anywhere is easy now. Lastly, there should be specific budget allocation for public toilets. There are only 103 public toilets across Dhaka now, according to latest available data and the number needs to increase.

Ms. Farzana Mannan
Deputy Secretary, Local Government Division (LGD), Government of Bangladesh (GoB)

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According to my experience in India through this South Asian Exchange on Public Sanitation programme, there are different models of public toilets which can be observed in the South Asian countries. The initial thought that anyone has is that the public toilets are going to be shabby. But after the visit, I have realized that SHE toilet and the other toilets like Loo Cafe, Mobile Toilets etc. are very good initiatives,

particularly for the marginalised members of society. I think public toilets in Bangladesh should adopt these practices and integrate IT monitoring system for efficient maintenance. LGD has budget for the City Corporations and municipalities as well. We have dynamic Minister, Secretary and Mayors, as well as WaterAid, Bhumijo and SNV who are working with the GoB to improve public toilet conditions.

Mr. Jakka Venkat Reddy
Mayor - Peerzadigura
Municipal Corporation,
Hyderabad, Telangana, India

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The government of Telangana has taken efficient steps to improve public sanitation with the introduction of the New Municipal Act 2019. For example, there has been improvement of public amenities for women particularly. Some toilets are maintained directly by the government, some by self-help groups and some by CSOs. Through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, private sector players and government have joined hands for regular operation, maintenance and hygiene promotion, as well as through revenue sharing agreements. This also involves infrastructure management. To



Collaborations between the public and private entities have resulted in improved infrastructures and maintenance.

ensure hygiene and cleanliness particularly, the Telangana government has introduced Patana Pragati Toilet Monitoring System (PPTMS), which is an ICT tool, where in the sanitary inspector visits the toilets twice a week and reports the condition of the toilets on the mobile based App. The government has also provided insect sprays, adequate water, liquid soap, sanitary pads and sanitary pad vending machines, disposable pad units, in schools and in other areas for women's safety and convenience. We have observed increased functionality and use of the public toilets because of these initiatives. We are also going to introduce the software developed by Wenalytics very soon for real-time monitoring of the public toilets. Collaborations between the public and private entities have resulted in improved infrastructures and maintenance. We have cleaner landscapes now because of the partnerships. The government of Telangana has taken a huge focus on women safety and improving hygiene situation for females in public toilet facilities. This agenda will continue in the future to create cleaner and more accessible facilities and improve public amenities in the public toilets. We invite stakeholders from other regions to collaborate and make use of our learnings for improved public sanitation.

Ms. Shamima Akter

Director of Corporate Affairs,
Partnerships and Communications,
Unilever Bangladesh

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From Unilever, we have observed that the lowest retention of female workers is in the Sales sector. This is because women do not feel inclined to use public sanitation facilities while they are working in the field. There is a huge need for women-friendly public toilets in Bangladesh. To address this issue, Unilever has partnered with Grameenphone for a project targeting Chittagong. Both companies have identified 43 offices to make the toilets female friendly with efficient monitoring services. This has helped to keep the women in field in Chittagong. However, these offices will not be open for everyone, but only the staff of Unilever and Grameenphone. What we can observe from this scenario is that if we have more female-friendly public toilets in the country, then more females can retain their jobs. We tried to implement the PPP model in Bangladesh in Poragbari slum, Mirpur, Dhaka. However, we have observed that families were not willing to pay the fees. Therefore, one of the issues

that can be highlighted is consumer behaviour and perception of public toilets. We could not generate enough revenue to introduce bathing and washing facilities outside their homes in this unit. For infrastructural development, it requires a lot of money, which can be managed. The bigger problem is proper maintenance. I believe we need to create a successful business model with adequate revenue generation to efficiently make use of the PPP model. One way could be to place advertisements within the public toilets in partnership with organisations like Bhumijo. This can generate more money for the entrepreneurs to maintain the toilets. Making the public toilets more female-friendly and having an appealing architecture and proper maintenance are also essential in addition to giving funds for PPP.

Mr. Abdullah Al-Muyeed
Chief Operating Officer (COO)
CWIS-FSM Support Cell - Department
of Public Health Engineering, GoB

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From an institutional point of view, we have covered faecal sludge management of the city's demand. This covers the city-wide inclusive sanitation approach of

the municipality. For public sanitation, we should not only focus on public toilets, but cover more things such as locations like park areas, market areas, etc. This requires some policy direction. We also need to focus on integrating the public toilet facilities in these areas as well. We can also leverage the use of ICT for improved public sanitation facilities such as how to find a public toilet. The public toilet app developed by WaterAid is a good asset in this regard. However, the functionality and sustainable use of these apps is also a crucial issue we need to address. The missing link is the lack of strength of continuous advocacy around operation and maintenance. We also mostly neglect environmental sanitation when building any sanitation-related infrastructure. To ensure this aspect of public sanitation, we can make use of Anaerobic Baffled Reactor (ABR) technologies and other technologies. We need to consider the whole circular economy and assess the value for it. This will also involve identifying the cost of environmental degradation at the start of the project cycle.



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Ms. Joanna D. Rosario
Head of Urban Programs,
World Vision Bangladesh



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Mr. Shahidul Islam
Water Sector Lead, SNV



From the citizen's perspective we do not get enough demand for the use of public toilets. There is no mechanism to listen from the citizens. If the demand comes from them, then steps can be taken to ensure proper public sanitation facilities. There are 329 municipalities outside the corporations which are still following the one-year lease approach for single public toilet. Many of the public toilets are not located in the right place and they are utilising the lease for other services. We should encourage the municipalities to provide a long-term lease. Also, subsidy should be based on the performance of the private operators.



We should encourage the municipalities to provide a long-term lease. Also, subsidy should be based on the performance of the private operators.

Mr. Raiman Krishna
Consultant, KPMG, India



India kickstarted the journey of providing full coverage of public toilets since 2014. At that time, the coverage was only around 30%, and now has fully saturated the market. The goal for the future is to improve the facilities. There are a few things which helped India to achieve this goal. The first is political will. The prime minister of India spoke to the masses to get access to improved sanitation. Secondly, we need to engage the masses and incentivise them to use toilets, for example, by making public toilets affordable. Next, there needs to be huge engagement of knowledge partners across states and countries that can facilitate learning. Also, we should not only think about innovation, but also the behaviour changes aspects. Lastly, local bodies and actors need to be strengthened to improve public sanitation across the whole region.

Mr. Chiri Babu Maharajan
Mayor, Lalitpur Metropolitan City



We did not have a long history of managing good public toilets. After promotion of the new constitution nine years back, the local authorities have been given tremendous authority regarding sanitation. We did not have local elections for almost 18 years prior to May 1974 and since we came to power, we have been trying our level best to address public toilet issues. But it is not an easy job, because there is an unbelievably bad perception among the public that the municipal toilets are not in decent shape and they smell bad, the environment is badly polluted, so we should not allow the construction of public toilets. But now, we are trying to convince the public that we are going to construct genuinely nice public toilets without any issues. Very recently we have piloted two toilets by partnering with Aerasan Sustainable Sanitation in Nepal and those two toilets are now being highlighted for the entire country of Nepal. A lot of people come to see those toilets and want to replicate the toilets in their cities, including in Kathmandu. We want to continue constructing such toilets in the future. In the last fiscal year, we have awarded 11

toilet contracts to the contractors being constructed. The Lalitpur Metropolitan City is not that big. It has just 36.2 square kilometres but density is huge as it has almost 1 million population. We need many more toilets to be constructed like the two piloted in collaboration with Aerosan. We are also trying to convert the city into a smart city which will require many more toilets to be constructed. In this case, this year, we will construct 15

Mr. Gajendra Maharjan
Mayor, Godawari Municipality



more toilets for this fiscal year. In total, we are aiming to have around 30 newly constructed toilets in my city. Construction is not a big challenge, but maintenance is. It is the wrong conception that the public say that the municipal toilets are not in good condition and spoil the environment. For that, we have incorporated a new model in which the two recent toilets constructed by the toilet operators will not have to pay revenue to the municipality if they are properly maintained. It is going well so far, and this model is going to be successful.

We have seen public toilets in India in the first phase through this exchange visit and in Bangladesh through the second phase. I also agree that maintenance is much more essential than construction of toilets. We are a new municipality and have learnt and observed a lot from the public toilet practices in India and Bangladesh. We have allocated a budget from our municipality for the construction of 20 new public toilets. We will continue this work to improve the public toilet situation in Nepal.



Conclusion and Way Forward

Remarks from
Prof. V. Srinivas Chary
Director of the Centre for Urban
Governance, Environment, Energy and
Infrastructure Development, ASCI

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From my observation, the countries in South Asia are miles ahead in terms of public toilet improvements than countries in Europe and America. Dhaka will be a crucial point for learning when we come back for the next round. Aspirational public toilets are a reflection of the vibrancy of the democracy of the country or the city. It is a noticeably clear reflection of how democracy works in that country or city. Public toilets are a symbolic thing in that regard. Warangal's SHE toilet which is exclusively being used and managed by women gets rid of the barrier. Nobody is doing anyone a favour by building a special toilet. Public toilet provision is a fundamental right of every citizen like voting and is an integral part of the democratization process. I would

request all the honourable mayors that whether it is provisions for disabled, special needs, women, men, children, public toilet provision is essential.

It makes so much political sense to establish and maintain public toilets. On the 138th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the city of Hyderabad launched 138 brand new public toilets on a single day. It was done because it made so much political sense to have well branded public toilets in every nook and corner of the city. This gives a huge political mileage. I would suggest the Government of Bangladesh to celebrate the country's 53rd independence in March 2024 by building and launching 53 brand new aspirational public toilets. This could be done through the PPP model, supported by big brands like Unilever. This will improve brand visibility and political mileage if there is a public toilet in every nook and corner of Dhaka.

We do not have to reinvent the wheel since there are clear business models available for construction, operational maintenance and technology. We do not have to invest money even to do this. For example, we can partner with Wenalytics to use their technology for public toilet operation and management. We do not have to invest anything because Wenalytics will be provided with service fee and we do not need to spend on the capital cost of the infrastructures i.e sensors. This is a service model called the Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) model, that provides the users with the ability to test, register, deploy and monitor the models. There are existing models available which can be leveraged and used such as the PPP and other business models for our public sanitation programmes.

Public sanitation, as a part of the city-wise inclusive sanitation, is a starting point. We need to see a lot of funding of serious programming going for public convenience improvement. We need funds, functionaries, and well-defined functions, the three F's. Functional accountability is very necessary.

There are a whole lot of innovations available that can be used. Since there are space constraints in Dhaka, there are innovative, architectural designs which can be used to accommodate the building of public toilets with minimum space availability yet ensuring all the aspirational parameters.

Remarks from Chief Guest
Mr. Atiqul Islam
Hon'ble Mayor, Dhaka North
City Corporation (DNCC):

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First, I welcome fellow Mayors from municipalities of India, Nepal and officials of municipalities and city corporations of Bangladesh in the South Asia Exchange on Public Toilets. This has been a much-needed event that WaterAid and ASCI have organized. I am happy to learn that officials from Bangladesh could visit and learn from the experiences of India and Nepal.

I have attentively listened to the deliberations of different participants of this exchange. I agree with the remark that we have to exchange the knowledge and best practices of all the countries in not only South Asia, but all over the world. The population density in Dhaka city is around 49,000 per sq km, one of the highest in the world. Dhaka North City Corporation and Dhaka South City Corporation combinedly officially have population around 2.3 million, and unofficially around 3.0 million. We have tried a lot of things to ensure services to the citizens. But going forward, we need to integrate a lot of new innovative, out-of-the-box ideas.

One of the challenges is the changing of perception related to environmental sanitation. This cannot be the sole responsibility of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB). The cost of land in Baridhara and Gulshan is very expensive and is almost the same as in Manhattan. If you have the ability to invest in land in these areas, then you should also ensure that you abide by all the compliances related to environmental sanitation. A published report by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and UNICEF accounts for the fact that 99.5% of residents living in these areas do not have septic tanks that fulfill compliance issues. This also leads to environmental degradation and pollution of water bodies. Therefore, their perceptions have to be changed.



We are going to geo-tag toilets for users through the 'Shobar Dhaka' app, which is a digital/ smart Bangladesh initiative taken by the GoB in partnership with WaterAid.

We have to take our own responsibility in protecting the environment and abiding by the laws. We also need to think about ways to efficiently conduct faecal sludge management and do on-site sanitation.

The demand for public toilets is practical, particularly for women. It is essential that women and other users can locate public toilets easily. We are going to geo-tag toilets for users through the 'Shobar Dhaka' app, which is a digital/ smart Bangladesh initiative taken by the GoB in partnership with WaterAid. We need to identify more innovative and technological solutions such as rainwater harvesting, faecal sludge management, biogas production and ICT integration. There are currently 114 toilets in Dhaka, but we need to improve the numbers to accommodate the dense population of Dhaka. I am inviting all stakeholders gathered here today to collaborate with the GoB to implement their various innovative public sanitation ideas.

For increased sustainability, all stakeholders will be allowed to include advertisements in the public toilets in DNCC. In addition, all refueling stations and shopping malls in DNCC must have gender segregated clean and well-maintained public toilets. This is the responsibility of respective owner of refueling station and shopping malls. If there is any deviation of this instruction, then respective authority of city corporation will take legal action against the institution.

I also agree with others that money and construction are not the problems, but maintenance is the most important challenge. Efficient monitoring of the public toilet facilities is very important. Lastly, I would like to mention again that innovations in countries like India and Nepal such as sanitary pad vending machines, insect sprays, QR code and ICT integration etc. are needed in Bangladesh.

As Bangladesh is going through its digital/ smart transition, I believe smart citizens need smart services.

With these few words, I would like to conclude my statement by thanking once again all the Guest Mayors and Officials from Nepal, India and different parts of Bangladesh and the organizers for arranging this kind of international exchange on public toilet.

Concluding Remarks by
Ms. Hasin Jahan
Country Director,
WaterAid Bangladesh

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I would firstly like to thank ASCI for partnering with WaterAid for this sharing initiative. I have a few points to mention. The first one is regarding how to promote use of public toilets by women. WaterAid Bangladesh is piloting women-safe campaigns for increased use of public toilets in one ward of Rajshahi City Corporation by making all the public toilets of one ward usable and safe for women. The next point is that setting the standards of toilets is essential. There is an international standard introduced by the

toilet coalition board. We are aligning all of WaterAid Bangladesh's work with these standards currently. We are rating the public toilets with stars according to the guidelines. We have rated our toilets up to three stars so far and now we understand the further scope of improvement.

We can build toilets, but unless the city corporation oversees the operations and management, those will never work. Utilising ICT could be a good mechanism for the city corporation officials to remotely monitor the toilets which are working well, and which are not working well. We are trying to incorporate introduce such ICT mechanism (E.g., use of digital dashboard) into our work and seeking attention of the Mayors for their collaboration and support in WaterAid's work. WaterAid is also working out simplified management models. We could figure out what would be the middle ground between typical lease system and manageable operation and maintenance models by different entities. We are interested to have a conversation with the government stakeholders on how to improve the government's existing system on management of public toilets,

and how they can allow the private sector/ NGOs/ social businesses to operate in a different model maintaining high quality standards of performance.

I would like to let the Honorable Mayor know how WaterAid will be happy to support to jointly organise a workshop with the CC to present how we can support the proper operation and maintenance of the public toilets which will be operated by all the petrol pump owners. We can also arrange visits with our partners, who are already on ground. WaterAid will be demonstrating some innovative toilets, maybe unisex ones since there is constrained space, along with the business model together with CC. WaterAid wants to extend long-term support to the city corporation to develop a real-time monitoring system based on ICT devices, so that government officials can remotely check the status of the toilets. Lastly, WaterAid can share the experience of 'womensafe' campaign in Rajshahi City Corporation and support the Honourable Mayor Atiqul Islam if he would be interested to implement the initiative in DNCC.

Final Recommendations

- 1 Access to public toilets should be a fundamental right of every citizen. It is a symbol of vibrant democracy and makes a lot of "political sense".**
- 2 Efficient operation and maintenance are much more important than construction of public toilets.**
- 3 Innovation is necessary to move forward with the agenda of improving public sanitation. Particularly, ICT based integration in public toilet service delivery is essential.**

Final Recommendations

- 4** There are innovative ways to think about limited space or resources such as using unconventional architectural designs.
- 5** Emphasis has to be given on the low use of public toilets by females. Understanding the factors of low use need to be found and actions are to be formulated accordingly.
- 6** Countries and individuals need to work on changing people's perceptions of public toilets from dirty and stinking' to a 'clean, safe and inclusive space'
- 7** Increased funding from governments and other sources is required for the future work in public sanitation.
- 8** Increased collaborations between the government, private entities and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) & Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)/ International NGOs (INGOs) are necessary for improved provision of public toilets.
- 9** Improved collaboration and coordination are important between the countries in South Asia with increased sharing of best practices and innovations in public toilet provisions.
- 10** The countries in South Asia need to share the existing models and technologies with each other so that models such as SHE toilets, PPP, ICT integration can be adopted and scaled up.
- 11** South Asian Exchange on Public Sanitation should be an annual event for South Asian countries to share best practices with each other.