

WASH service delivery assessment in small coastal towns of Bangladesh

Highlights:

- The service recipients rely mostly on self-supply for water and sanitation
- Local level WASH service monitoring is required for local need assessment and planning
- Water resources management(WRM) planning is absent in WASH service delivery

Introduction and objectives: The objective of this exercise was to understand the existing service delivery mechanism of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene from a system's approach perspective. Instead of assessing the service, this assessment looks at the different building blocks of the service delivery system to assess the long term sustainability and robustness of the service. Because taps and toilets can eventually break down but a strong system keep the service running. The assessment particularly looks at the service delivery system of small coastal towns because small municipalities often receive less resource from the central government they are challenged by harsh climate events.

Methodology approach: The assessment used IRCWASH's Building Block tool for Service Delivery Mechanism assessment¹. The building blocks are Institutions, Finance, Infrastructure, Monitoring, Regulation and Water Resources Management. The assessment used a spreadsheet based tool with traffic light presentation. The assessment locations are three small coastal towns (Bhola, Barguna and Ramgati) with population ranges from 30,000 to 100,000². Apart from that the study collected secondary information from 4 more small towns. The assessment had 3 key questions: 1.How strong is the service delivery institutions in terms of capacity/skills? 2. How informed are the service provisions in terms of finance and monitoring? 3. How WASH duty bearers consider other issues like WRM in their work?

Analysis and results: Information was collected using two sources, document review and key personnel interview. WASH duty bearers and active citizens are considered as key personnel for the assessment. 15 such interviews were carried out for the three towns. The answers are tabulated in the spreadsheet tool to get score for the building blocks. 7 key findings can be extracted from the results:

- Most of the population rely on self-supply for water and sanitation services (latrines and boreholes mostly), technical skills and spare parts are available for those services
- DPHE and municipality are the two key service providers for WASH. Both has good training and capacity building programmes. However, the training courses are stratified and generic thus lacks content for coastal need
- Hygiene as a service is a neglected issue at local level and no responsible authority/personnel is there in the organogram for hygiene
- Small municipalities lack capacity to generate revenue. Thus with limited finance, WASH becomes a less priority issue for municipality officials

¹ <https://www.ircwash.org/tools/wash-system-building-block-assessment-tool>

² <http://www.barisaldiv.gov.bd/>

- No proper WASH service monitoring system exists at these small town level
- Knowledge on Faecal Sludge Management found poor among service providers
- Water Resources Management planning is mostly missing in WASH services

Conclusion and recommendations: It is observed in the assessment that elected representatives of the municipalities have accountability to the residents and thus try to allocate resource on a lump-sum basis for sanitation. However, no local level monitoring and planning mechanism exists for such municipalities. Development projects for WASH are planned at higher level and implemented by DPHE. A coordination gap exists here. DPHE has included environmental assessments and protection measures in their procedure which is a positive change. However, more coordination with the WRM duty bearers (e.g. Water Development Board) is needed.