CSO Involvement in Government Decision Making Structure
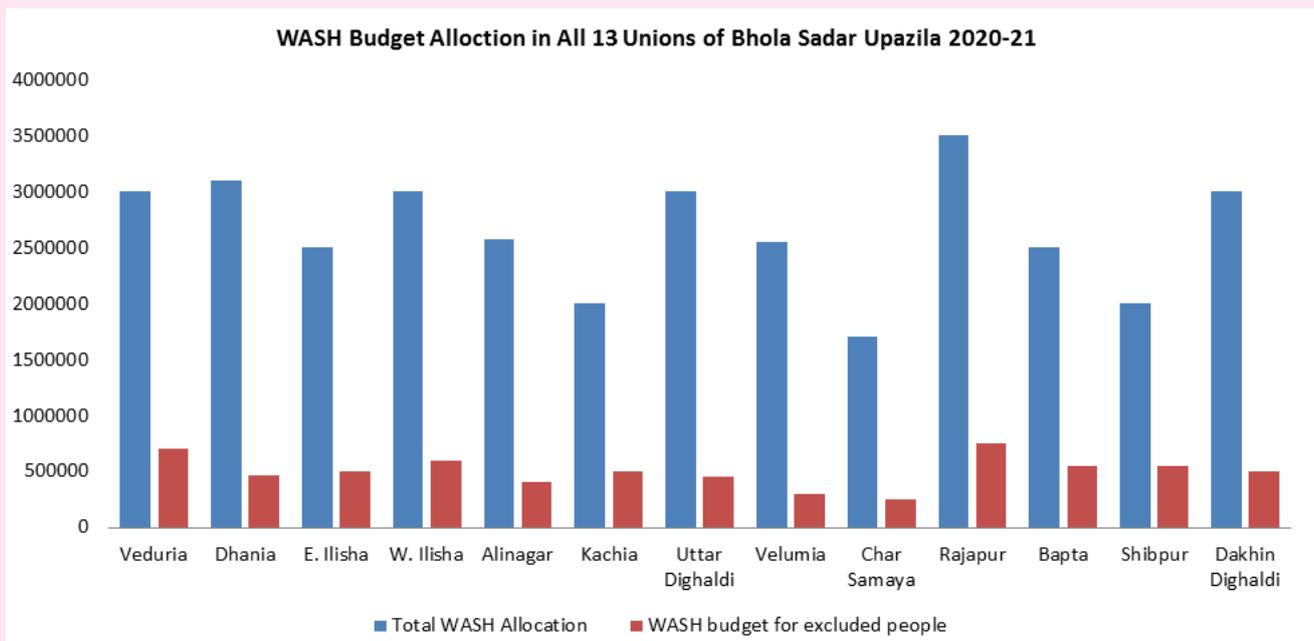
2020

Bangladesh Water Act 2013 (BWA) is a framework Law to integrate and coordinate the water resources management in the country. The Water Act will establish a new, integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of Countries Rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater. The BWA entails a coordinated and comprehensive water regime in respect of development, management, extraction, distribution, use, and protection and preservation of water resources in the country. The need for a comprehensive legal framework to face the growing challenges regarding water rights, protection of water resources, water use, water services and management is widely acknowledged. Executive Committee of the National Water Resources Council (NWRC) is the principal water regulator as per Water Act. Water Resources Planning Organization (WARPO) is the secretariat to the ECNWRC. The Bangladesh Water Act will ensure:

- best use of Water Resources

- integration of the acts of different organizations

- legitimize water rights of poor and disadvantaged

- control of uncontrolled/unaccounted abstraction, diversion, pollution

- an optimal, efficient way of using scarce water resources.

Rights to Water

The Bangladesh Water Law has established the right to access water. Access to drinking water and water for domestic usage being considered as basic rights. S3(2) of BWA states the "...right to potable water, use of water for hygiene and sanitation will be considered shall be treated as a universal

WASH Budget Allocation in All 13 Unions of Bhola Sadar Upazila 2020-21

Legend: ■ Total WASH Allocation ■ WASH budget for excluded people

right."Article S2(3) says that "..... the land owner will contain the right to use of surface water on private property and the owner will use this under the provision of this Act. Although there is no mention of issuance of licenses or permits in the Act, it is implicit that there will be requirement for the issuance of permits/licenses for large scale water withdrawal by individuals and organizations beyond domestic use (permit for small scale groundwater abstraction may not be feasible option).

Collaboration and coordination

Collaboration between institutions is the most important aspect of water governance in Bangladesh, and urgent attention is needed to ensure that it is strengthened as much as possible for the implementation of the 2013 Water Act.There are five other principal government water users namely, the Ministries of Agriculture (MoA), Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C), Ministry of Industries (MoI), Ministry of Textiles & Jute (MoT&J) and Disaster Management & Relief (MoDM&R) along with Ministry of Water Resources. A clear coordination capacity must be there at WARPO to involve the agencies under these Ministries for making the Act effective in different sectors.

Water Rules 2018:

The long waited 'Bangladesh Water Rule 2018' got approved. A Government Gazette Notification has been published on 18

August 2018 for the same.Bangladesh Water Rules 2018 was prepared and finalised following Bangladesh Water Act, 2013. Water Resources Planning Organization (WARPO) of Ministry of Water Resources has taken the lead coordination role make it happened and organised a number of consultations with relevant sector actors. DORP has contributed in the process and provided a number of recommendations on the draft.

CSO become member of standing committees of local government structures

- Sanitation, Water Supply and Sewerage standing committee (WASH committee at Union)

- Public Health, Sanitation and Pure Water Supply Standing Committee (WASH committee at Upazila)

- Union Integrated Water Resource Management Committee

- Upazila Integrated Water Resource Management Committee

How an NGO works with any UP is quite important – it may work for a UP; it could work through a UP; or it could work with a UP.

Citizen engagement:

Citizen Engagement is commonly referred as the "two-way interaction between citizens and governments or the private sector that give citizens a stake in decision-making, with the objective of improving development outcomes." The spectrum of citizen engagement includes government sharing information with citizens, and citizens drawing on this information to take action and communicate, including providing feedback to government, both solicited and unsolicited. Key to this definition is the responsiveness of government to citizen voice. While the scope of citizen engagement includes consultation, collaboration, participation and empowerment, these typically imply a one-way interaction. The end game for citizen engagement is to improve the accountability of governments and service providers, thus closing the feedback loop.

The standing committees are central components of Union Parishad (UP). The 4,500 UPs across the country cannot be strong unless the committees are strengthened. However, these committees are not active in about 90% of the Parishads because the elected chairmen and other members are not properly aware and interested about its functions and jurisdictions. The reasons behind the slow-moving performance of Standing

Committees may be attributed to a number of factors: lack of initiatives of UP members; lack of pressure from the common people; lack of political pressure; lack of skills required for planning and implementing development programmes at the local level; no specific terms of references of Standing Committees; unwillingness on the part of UP Chairman to delegate authority and even non-existence of Standing Committees, or existence only on paper.Since committees run under the statuses of less formal rules, committee members are in a good position to discuss issues in an unceremonious and pleasant manner and to develop relationships with committee colleagues who represent different interests of the community.

Recommendation:

1. Follow up the standing committee meetings of WASH at Union and Upazila level.

2. Follow up the IWRM committee meetings at Union and Upazila level.

3. Share the learning with other CSOs, NGOs and government departments.

4. Monitor the progress by the CSOs with simple structured formats as required.