

Ascending Health

through

School Sanitation



Sanitation facilities at schools across Bangladesh are in a sorry state reporting only 35% of schools having the facility of handwashing with soap and water. The number of Toilets in proportion with the number of students is also not up to the mark. There is only one toilet for 187 students while ideally it should have been one toilet against 50 students. Poor facilities at school level puts especially the school-going adolescent girls at risk as they are bound to endure long school hours in unhygienic conditions. The issue is further nurtured under the persisting culture in our society through which the girls are basically receiving different misconceptions about menstrual hygiene behavior and their reproductive health from unaware family members. The poor knowledge of WaSH and low coverage of improved hygiene behavior in the rural hard-to-reach areas further puts their nutritional status and reproductive health in jeopardy. Ensuring separate menstrual hygiene facilities for the girl students is a far call despite Government's directions towards ensuring safe sanitation set up at schools.

**Designed for
Boys, Girls &
Physically
Challenged**

**Reduced Risk of
Entering Poor
Reproductive
Health State**

**Increased
School
Attendance**

NGO Forum's School WaSH Programme

NGO Forum organizes School WaSH Programme considering the advantage of peer-to-peer learning approach and the formative age when children can be motivated easily by their teachers. The Programme incorporates both software and hardware components and it is organized with the Forum's partner NGOs. The intervention aims at orienting school teachers and educating students on safe WaSH practices in their daily lives. Both boys & girls are being mobilized and are advocating the WaSH messages to their family and respective community as catalysts. NGO Forum organizes school WaSH programmes for the students within 10th grade with particular emphasis on girl students. Under the Programme, a School Committee is formed with the representation from teachers, local electorate, parents and PNGOs. The Committee is responsible for ensuring that the teachers of the respective school continuously reinforce the hygienic education on a regular basis. As part of the hardware component under the School WaSH Programme, School Latrines with separate facilities for boys and girls are being installed at selected schools requiring utmost attention.

The Technical Distinctness

- NGO Forum offers different types of School Sanitation facilities addressing the geophysical contexts.
- Suitably designed models for boys, girls and a particular model for both boys & girls with special consideration for the students with physical disabilities.
- The School Sanitation system consists of a number of squatting with a common disposal system connecting the septic tank.
- The promoted system is a combination of toilet, urinal, hand-washing facilities and menstrual hygiene management with running water supply.
- A dumping point is connected to a UPVC pipe to allow dumping of the sanitary napkins while a separate raised-slab is placed for enabling the girl-students washing cloths, if needed.



Classes are no more hampered

The total number of students of Mukul Niketan High School is 5,800 with above 2,000 of them girl students. The privately run school is located in Mymensingh city area with a compact structure attracting huge number of students with its good reputation in the city for education. The school has a total of 32 toilets. 8 toilets are situated at each floor of the 4-storied buildings placed in rectangular positions. However, none of the toilets had any special arrangement for girl students to maintain menstrual hygiene which led to being absent during the first days of menstruation cycle. For those who attended classes, they faced the risk of entering into a poor reproductive health condition for lifelong for not being able to change the sanitary napkins in due time. Anaya Sarkar, a 10th grade student describes, “We stayed for long hours in unhygienic conditions. We didn’t feel well mentally and physically.” A School Latrine for the girls was provided with modern designing equipped with menstrual hygiene facilities. Besides, space for changing, the Latrine provides special chamber for dumping the napkins, washing cloths used for menstrual hygiene purpose, etc. Comparing the new Latrine with the existing toilets, Maimuna Binti Hasan, another 10th grader said, “This Latrine has very good light and air circulation. The existing old toilets have extremely narrow space and almost no natural light inside making it a very uncomfortable place to use. There is no soap, or any clothe hanger or soap case even which we can use for changing the napkins.” Now, even the female teachers have mentioned to use the new modern School Latrine. The total expenditure of the Latrine is BDT. 74,500 of which project contributed BDT. 53,353 and the school contributed BDT. 22,144.

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Taslima Khatun, In charge of Disciplinary Action discussing health issues with students

MHM Adeptness in Conventional School Latrines Sets an Upbeat Mood among Students



Around 350 girl-students found relief in having availing menstrual hygiene facilities in the installed School Latrine in Bireshwarpur Girl's High School, a popular private-owned school located in Gohalbari union of Bholahat upazila, Chapai Nawabganj. Mst. Muslema Khatun, Teacher, mentions, "The facility has reduced loss of school days among the girl-students during times of their menstrual cycle as they now find the comfort to be able to freshen up whenever needed. Previously, they had to leave classes and walk home for changing. Thus, each month, girls missed out at least two school days due to lack of such support in the prevailing toilet."

Maintenance of School Sanitation

Involving students in maintaining environmental hygiene of their school is also nurtured through the School WaSH Programme. Maintenance of the Toilet is ensured through cleaning by students. The routine-cleaning is organized within the students of sixth to tenth grade. Three students from each class clean the Toilets following the routine. The students are also changed rotationally. The process is supervised by a teacher of the respective school.



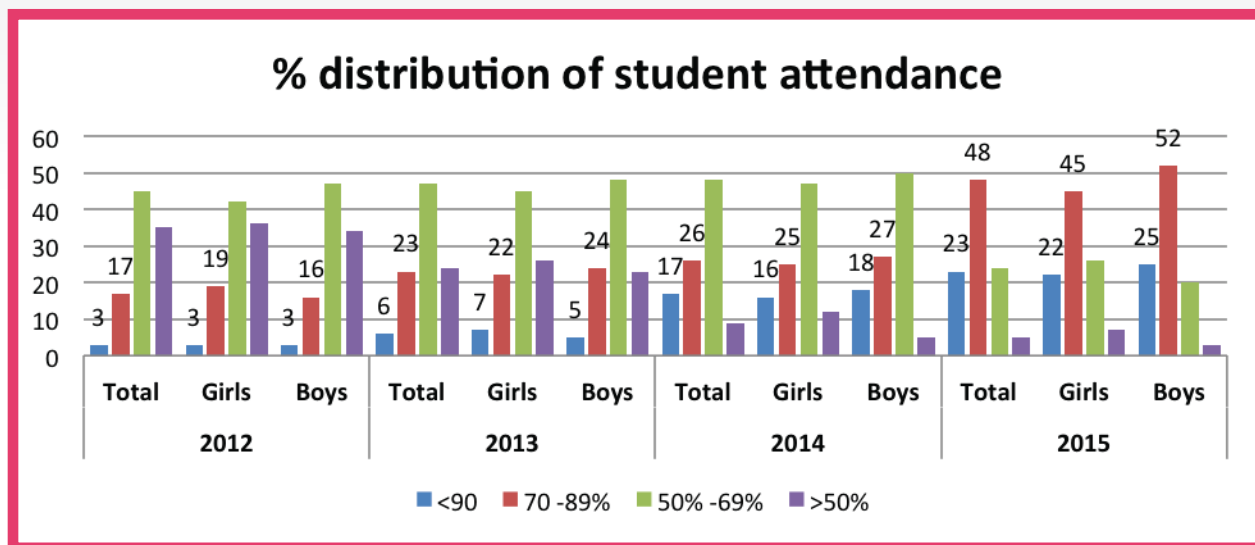
A Silent Breakthrough in Promoting Health

The benefits of an improved sanitation facility in schools should be measured with the spillover effect it brings in lives of children. It supports psychological well-being of the students, increases their school attendance, develops understanding on safe WaSH and on the sense of privacy and personal safety. A notable spillover effect is that it sends a momentous message to families through their children on ensuring safe WaSH at households premises also which ultimately contributes in promoting safe WaSH in the society.



Reinforcing Menstrual Hygiene Management in Hard-to-Reach Areas

NGO Forum's School WaSH Programme experiences in rural hard-to-reach areas revealed that unhygienic sanitation facilities with common toilets for girls and boys often made the adolescent girls reluctant to use toilets. The 2-chambered Latrine with water and soap facilities and separate arrangement for Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) introduced under the Programme has brought positive results in a number of ways. While some schools have reported increased number of girl-student enrollment to respective schools having this improved hygienic School Latrine for girls, most high schools have experienced increased amount of monthly attendance in classes. Statistics derived from 4-year School WaSH intervention by NGO Forum showed that school attendance (90% days/year) of girl students increased to 22% in 2015 from the base status 3% in 2012 because of improved WaSH facilities in respective 83 school campuses.



Clean Toilet Increased Student Enrollment

Dropout and absence of students has reduced at Shatgaon Jibdara School located in Kamrupdolong union of haor-based Dakshin Sunamganj upazila under Sunamganj. Now the school environment is pollution-free. Sanitation facilities of the school were also very unhygienic. Noman Ahmed, teacher of the school says, "Unhygienic sanitation facilities with common toilet for boys and girls were making the girls reluctant to attend the school crossing such a long distance. Diarrhoea contamination was also high among the students. Now we have a 2-chambered Latrine with water and soap facilities as NGO Forum's local partner ERA came forward to provide the support. Girl students now have separate arrangement for maintaining menstrual hygiene. School enrollment especially of the girl students has significantly increased." The sensitized students are now convincing their parents for household hygienic latrine installation while to maintain clean environment.

Scope of Scaling Up

The School WaSH Programme has been a successful endeavor of NGO Forum implemented within schools located both at urban & rural communities. The covered schools have greatly benefited from the provision of safe WaSH facilities. Teachers are enthusiastic over the increased enrollment and attendance of students in their respective schools. The spillover effect that the intervention has brought forth is the motivation created by school students at household level to install hygienic latrines. And it appears to be proven and holds the potentiality to escalate safe WaSH and especially Menstrual Hygiene Management to school-girls who would ultimately lead the future generation.

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Photography: Joseph Halder, Abul Kalam Raja, Graphic Design: Rokibul Hasan

Printed by: Dana Printers Ltd.



EUROPEAN UNION



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