



# A brief on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) study in Bagerhat Paurashava, Bangladesh

## Background

The "Study on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Bagerhat Paurashava of Bangladesh" was an initiative under "Sustainable Urban Water Cycles (SUWC)" project of SNV. The project promotes inclusive policies, focusing on equal access for all, including women and disadvantaged groups. This study sought to increase women's and marginalized groups' participation in municipal decision making process regarding water, sanitation, and waste management services. SNV conducted a study on GESI in Bagerhat Paurashava to gain a comprehensive understanding of gender equality, disability, and social inclusion within governance frameworks, guiding project implementation strategies. CWIS-FSM Support Cell, DPHE provided technical support and VAALO avant-garde ltd. conducted the study as consultant.



## Methodology



Qualitative study design



Secondary documents reviewed



Study area for FGD were ward 3, 4, 6, 7 of Bagerhat Paurashava



Training of interviewers was conducted prior to field visit



A day long workshop conducted with Relevant staff of Paurashava and stakeholders



Conducted 25 KIIs and 6 FGDs with relevant stakeholders including community people



Ensured consent of all participants and maintained confidentiality of data.



Thematic analysis used for data analysis and reporting.

## Key Findings

### Gap Analysis of Reviewed Policies and Relevant Documents

Reviewed policy	Sub theme		Core Theme
	Gender equality	Social inclusion	GESI
Local Government (Paurashava) Act, 2009	✓	✓	✓
ToR of Town Level Coordination Committee (TLCC) and Word Committee (WC)	✓	✓	✓
Gender equality strategy and action plan 2022-2030 (LGED)	✓	✗	Partially mentioned
Guidelines for Gender Action Plan (GAP) Implementation	✓	✗	Partially mentioned
National Menstrual Hygiene Strategy, 2021	✓	✓	
Institutional Regulatory Framework (IRF) for FSM, 2017 and National Action Plan (NAP) for Paurashava, 2020	✓	✓	✓
Solid Waste Management Rules, 2021	✗	✗	✗
Integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in WASH and IWRM- A Quick Guide for Practitioners (USAID)	✓	✓	✓
Review on gender-inclusive WASH policies in Bangladesh	✓	✓	✓
Project Proposal of Sustainable Urban Water Cycles Bangladesh – Extract	✓	✓	✓
Baseline Report of SUWC Project, Bagerhat Paurashava, SNV	✓	✓	✓

## Mapping Exercise of Existing Services and Organizations

Name of Organizations	Focus area	Working area at Bagerhat
Department of Women Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VWB, ICVGD, Micro-credit program for-self employment</li> <li>• Skill based training programme for women for livelihood</li> <li>• Maternity allowance</li> <li>• Lactating mother allowance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VWB, ICVGD, Micro-credit program for-self employment (including LIC)</li> <li>• Skill based training programme for women for livelihood (including LIC)</li> <li>• Maternity allowance (including LIC)</li> <li>• Lactating mother allowance (including LIC)</li> <li>• Awareness on MHM</li> </ul>
Department of Social Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify person with disability</li> <li>• Provides allowance and training</li> <li>• Safety net programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify person with disability (including LIC)</li> <li>• Provides allowance and training (including LIC)</li> <li>• Safety net programme</li> </ul>
Practical Action Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-income communities</li> <li>• Federation of sanitation worker</li> <li>• Climate-resilient waste and sanitation programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with Waste and Sanitation Workers</li> <li>• Enhancing entrepreneurial skills</li> <li>• Improving working environment</li> </ul>
Society Development Committee (SDC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water and Sanitation</li> <li>• Women Empowerment</li> <li>• Savings Deposit, Human Rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational and Entrepreneurship Skills development</li> <li>• Saving deposit/life insurance for waste/sanitation workers</li> </ul>
UDDIPAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water, Sanitation and protection project</li> <li>• Water Treatment Plant Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loans for Ethnic Groups</li> <li>• Low service charges</li> <li>• Mobile branch operation</li> <li>• Cultural and financial development projects</li> </ul>
BDRCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disaster and climate risk management</li> <li>• Training on disaster response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement of Water Supply System</li> <li>• Focuses on gender and diversity protection</li> <li>• Child protection</li> </ul>
Shangkolpo Protibondi Unnayan Shangstha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the livelihood of people with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy for promoting rights of people with disabilities</li> </ul>
Rupantar (Aparajita Network)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political empowerment of women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocating for women's participation in decision-making process</li> </ul>

## Key Findings

### Gender Equality

- i** 85% of sanitation worker of Bagerhat Paurashava are women, and they received equal wages similar to their male counterparts.
- ii** The concern about the lack of active participation of women in decision-making processes, despite their presence in various committees.
- iii** Lack of women-friendly infrastructure such as separate toilet chamber for women at Paurashava office, public toilet and household level at Low Income Community of Bagerhat Paurashava.
- iv** In Bagerhat Paurashava, inadequate solid waste management systems place a disproportionate burden on women and girls, who typically handle household waste but have limited involvement in decision-making and lack access to information and awareness on waste-related issues.
- v** Women and girls engaged in waste handling are greater risk of health due to their exposure to poorly managed waste.
- vi** Women encounter greater difficulties in accessing safe water, sanitation, and hygiene services, as public spaces frequently lack gender-segregated and female-friendly facilities, which in turn restricts their mobility.
- vii** Women's participation in Faecal Sludge Management (FSM) and Solid Waste Management (SWM) remains limited due to cultural stigmas and concerns about personal safety.

### “ Fight for Dignity and Justice ”

Sandhya Rani Roy, a resilient housewife from a poor family, served on the slum improvement and town-level coordination committees in Ward 06, Bagerhat Paurashava. She led to labor for construction of walkway. She faced marginalization due to gender discrimination. Sandhya's daughter faced challenges at school, but Sandhya and her husband resolved the issue. This is the example of her sparking and determination to fight for justice. Her story demonstrates the power of resilience and advocacy.

### Menstrual Hygiene Management by gender of the household head

Male 		Female 
34.4%	Level 4: Safe MHM facility with safe products and disposal	44.2%
34.4%	Level 3: Safe MHM facility with safe products	27.9%
17.6%	Level 2: Safe facility for MHM	18.6%
10.7%	Level 1: MHM facility	7.0%
2.9%	Level 0: No MHM facility	2.3%

## Social inclusion

- i** The inadequate management of solid waste has a greater impact on vulnerable communities, contributing to more environmental and health risks.
- ii** These marginalized groups face greater challenges in accessing proper waste management services, resulting in heightened exposure to unhygienic conditions and associated health hazards.
- iii** In Bagerhat Paurashava, low-income and marginalized communities struggle to access basic hygiene facilities, heightening their vulnerability—particularly during the monsoon season and natural disasters. For instance, in some low-income areas, up to 12 families may rely on a single toilet without separate provisions for women and men, posing significant challenges to maintaining proper sanitation and hygiene.
- iv** Marginalized communities—such as cleaners, sanitation workers, the Horizon community, and low-income community's residents—are frequently left out of planning processes for faecal sludge management (FSM), flood and drought management, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) initiatives. As a result, the solutions developed often fail to meet their specific needs, as their perspectives and voices are overlooked during both the design and implementation stages.
- v** Infrastructure accessibility for people with disabilities remains limited in the context of climate change preparedness, as cyclone shelters and sanitation facilities often lack necessary accommodations.

### Premise level solid waste storage by gender of the household head

Male 		Female 
11.7%	Level 4: Safe solid waste storage and disposal	23.5%
21.6%	Level 3: Safe solid waste storage	16.2%
0.4%	Level 2: Safe solid waste storage without littering	0.0%
65.2%	Level 1: Unafe solid waste storage	60.3%
1.1%	Level 0: No place for solid waste storage	0.0%

## Sustainability and Capacity Building for GESI Implementation

- i** The lack of training and workshops on GESI-integrated program and project implementation has hindered the ability of elected representatives, government officials, and committee members to effectively apply GESI principles.
- ii** The lack of voices from women and marginalized groups hindered the approaches to sustain GESI.
- iii** NGOs such as Practical Action and the Social Development Committee have been actively engaged in promoting dignified working conditions for sanitation workers.
- iv** The project "**Towards a Dignified Life for All Sanitation Workers in Bangladesh**," initiated by the Social Development Committee, seeks to empower registered sanitation workers of Bagerhat Paurashava and involve them in decision-making processes.
- v** The Department of Women's Affairs and the Department of Social Services provide training programs aimed at empowering women and marginalized groups by enhancing their skills and improving their socioeconomic status.

## “ Resilience and Empowerment: The Inspiring Journey of Rokshana ”

Rokshana, a cleaner at Bagerhat Paurashava, overcomes financial challenges to start a tea stall. Despite earning only BDT. 3000 monthly by cleaning Paurashava, she secured a microfinance loan and repaid it. She expanded her business, creating a stable income for her family. Her tea stall has become a community gathering spot, symbolizing her resilience.

### Pathways: Access to sanitation facilities by type of settlements

	 Planned residential area	 Unplanned residential area	 Informal settlement/slum
Level 4: Environmentally Safe	59.7%	30.5%	0.0%
Level 3: Toilet improved+fly management	36.1%	50.2%	5.0%
Level 2: Basic toilets	1.4%	6.0%	25.0%
Level 1b: Shared toilets	2.8%	13.3%	65.0%
Level 1a: Unimproved toilets	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%
Level 0: No toilet/OD	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

## Key Recommendations

### Gender Equality

- Paurashava's WASH services should advance gender equality by fostering awareness, encouraging participation, and promoting **women's leadership** in policy and decision-making. This requires capacity building, legislative support, and targeted training to strengthen women's influence.
- Promote the **active participation of women** in decision-making at all levels of water and sanitation committee and management to develop inclusive and effective solutions that reflect their specific needs and challenges.
- Take initiative to **strengthen the capacity of women** representative of different committee at Paurashava level.
- Develop strategy to **foster menstrual health hygiene**.
- Gender perspectives should be **integrated into workforce policies** to promote equality and cultivate an inclusive environment, particularly in leadership roles within waste management.
- A theoretical **understanding of gender equity** must be translated into practical action through consistent policy reviews and strong compliance measures, including regular audits and effective feedback systems.
- The GESI framework should be put into practice through **training and awareness campaigns**, the inclusion of gender-responsive facilities in infrastructure projects, and the reform of existing structures to ensure inclusivity.

## “ Championing Disability Rights in Bagerhat ”

Firoz Hauladar, a person with disability and a leader of people with disabilities rights movement in Bagerhat has significantly advocating to establish their rights in system. He is playing instrumental role to organize people with disabilities for raising awareness from entitlement perspective, advocating for a separate hospital line, representing in the Disaster Management Committee of Bagerhat Paurashava. His work demonstrates the power of advocacy and inclusive policies.



## Social inclusion

- Empower marginalized communities by providing **training and workshops**, ensuring their representation in local committees such as Town Level Coordination Committee (TLCC) and Word Committee (WC), and reactivating these forums to strengthen their participation and advocacy efforts.
- Projects related to SWM, FSM, and WASH should **actively engage** women and marginalized groups, ensuring their meaningful involvement in community meetings, decision-making, and strategic activities through inclusive forums, thematic discussions, feedback sessions, and other participatory approaches.
- Sanitation infrastructure should include **specific provisions**—such as accessible washrooms and drinking water sources—for people with disabilities and those from the hardcore poor category, to ensure equitable access to sanitation services.
- **Develop the database** of sanitation worker, waste worker, emptier, people with disability, sex worker and other marginalized community, prepare plan based on their specific need and implement accordingly.
- **Disaster preparedness** should prioritize women's safety by providing separate, well-maintained toilets in shelters and addressing the specific needs of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups to create an inclusive and protective environment.
- Give priority to develop a **comprehensive drainage system** in Bagerhat Paurashava to reduce the risk of waterlogging, while integrating the GESI framework to enhance access for vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- Improve waste collection in Bagerhat Paurashava by **assessing the capacity of the private company**, incorporating GESI principles, and addressing the needs of marginalized groups, while promoting equitable access and inclusive employment opportunities.
- Providing **essential equipment** to sanitation workers is crucial to ensure they are properly equipped and protected, including tools such as sweeping dusters and personal protective gear (PPE) like gloves and boots necessary for their work.
- Review the **salaries of sanitation workers** to ensure they are sustainable and sufficient to meet basic family needs, which can help enhance their motivation and job satisfaction.
- Promote the mechanism of **community feedback** regarding Paurashava's services.

Bangladesh's gender-inclusive policies face challenges in local implementation, necessitating training for elected officials and stakeholders to understand the significance of GESI and better align with existing frameworks. Paurashava requires collaboration and coordination with public and private organizations to implement the coordinated GESI initiative. Involving the private sector can greatly strengthen GESI efforts by promoting sustainable outcomes and empowering local communities through collaboration with other stakeholders and the sharing of valuable knowledge and best practices.



### For further information

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