

Improving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

The Importance of WASH

The CLP recognises the importance of addressing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) on the chars. Improving access to WASH has a number of health, nutrition and livelihoods benefits, as it:

- reduces the incidence of diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases affecting char-dwellers, especially children;
- improves food security by helping food have a more positive nutritional impact;
- increases household productivity and income; and
- prevents malnutrition and anaemia in pregnant mothers and children under five.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene on the Chars

People living on island chars typically have poor access to improved water and sanitation. Households often drink water from unprotected tube wells – i.e. those that are not protected by an undamaged platform, or that are too close to latrines or garbage points. In exceptional cases, some households collect water from nearby rivers or ponds. They also commonly use unhygienic latrines or defecate in the open. Moreover, they have poor hygiene practices and little knowledge of the importance of hand washing with soap after defecation, before eating and before feeding their children.



Ensuring Access to Improved Water

To access improved water, chars households need essential infrastructure such as good quality tube wells. Subsidies of approximately Tk. 8,000 (around £67) are offered to households to install new tube wells. CLP aims to ensure that every five people in a village have access to a tube well that meets CLP standards. In addition, each core participant is targeted for a tube well within easy reach – which CLP defines as “within a ten-minute round-trip walk.”



In each case, one household is asked to receive the tube well by contributing Tk 1,000 (about £8) to the overall price and in return is given ownership. Ownership means that the household must maintain the pump in working order and allow all surrounding households free access to the new tube well.



Where tube wells exist and meet certain criteria, CLP upgrades them by installing a concrete platform. This prevents groundwater contamination through the base of the well.



Ensuring Access to Adequate Sanitation

Having adequate sanitation facilities is a major step towards raising community health standards. CLP provides a subsidy to all households in the programme's working villages to construct low-cost sanitary latrines.

Awareness campaigns are carried out using the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach. This aims to trigger pride in good sanitation behaviours and generate public disapproval of open defecation.

Improving Hygiene Behaviour

As a part of the programme's social development activities, health and hygiene awareness-raising campaigns are carried out. The Social Development Unit uses a number of communication tools to promote



positive hygienic practices such as hand-washing with soap, using sanitary latrines, wearing sandals, and collecting, storing and using water safely, among others. Messages are designed to be simple and clear, with flip charts and group discussions to get people talking and learning about good hygiene behaviour. The programme also takes advantage of opportunities to raise awareness at the community level during local fairs (community melas), where messages are communicated through display posters, folk songs and popular theatre.

