

Hasina, Bangladesh

Hasina is the caretaker of a sanitation block in Tajgoan – a slum in Bangladesh's capital city, Dhaka.

Tajgoan is home to about 1,000 rubber factory workers, living in extremely cramped conditions.

More than 70 million Bangladeshi people live without any form of toilet and disease is widespread. In slums like Tajgoan, communal latrine and washing blocks have been set up as places where people can wash.

WaterAid believes everyone has a right to clean water and sanitation. Here Hasina describes how she helped set up a sanitation block in her community. >>

Hasina, in front of the sanitation block.



Boys and girls use the block to wash. ↑



↑ The community worked together to help build the block.

Q&A

Hi Hasina. How important is this sanitation block?

“Before, I used to be lucky to get a wash once every three days. I had to travel to the market and buy 20 litres of water. I would even wait for the rain and stand in it for a wash. Now I bathe every day and feel so much more clean and comfortable.”

Are you earning money from it as well?

“As caretaker for the block I earn 600 taka per month, which is paid for by the community. Before this job I was unemployed.”

How many people use the sanitation block?

“About 100 families use the block which is split into male and female facilities for privacy. Our community also gets some income from truck drivers and other people from outside the community that come to use it. Sanitation is very popular now.”

What did everyone do before the block was built?

“Before, it was so difficult to find a place to go to the toilet, especially for women. The conditions are so crowded here that there isn't a spare place. Having no privacy whatsoever was awful.”

“We didn't talk about these problems to our men-folk because of the embarrassment. We weren't used to sharing our problems in a group of women either. We just put up with the situation.”

So, when did things change?

“A female health worker came into our community and brought us women together. She gave us the courage to speak up about our problems and gave us hope that things could change. We felt more powerful and soon found that our shyness left us.”

How long did it take to get the block built?

“It took us six months to work together with WaterAid to get a well in our community. It only took one month to actually build the sanitation block.”

Have you achieved what you set out to do?

“This block has also become an income generator for the community. Our children are much cleaner and healthier, as we decided that they should use the facilities for free. Now we want to get decent healthcare in our community.”



Bangladesh

Population: 140.5m
Infant mortality: 69/1000
Life expectancy: 63.3 years
Water supply coverage: 74%
Sanitation coverage: 39%
Below poverty line: 49.8%
Adult literacy: 41%

More than 150 million people are crowded onto low lying lands where the Himalayan Rivers empty into the sea. More than 23 million people live in the urban areas of Bangladesh, almost half of them in three major cities: Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna.