



Policy brief on Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH)

Spatial inequalities in ADP allocation: A barrier to realizing SDG 6

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by
Hossain Zillur Rahman
Mohammad Abdul Wazed



WASH: A challenge of uneven progress



Bangladesh had remarkable success in achieving WASH-related MDG-era targets with drinking water made available to 98% of the population (JMP data) and near-total eradication of open defecation. SDG-era targets however are more challenging with the focus on safe water and safely managed sanitation as well as the under-focused issue of hygiene. Bangladesh embraced the SDG challenge pro-actively and fixed 39+1 National Priority Targets (NPT) out of 169 SDG Targets to ensure realization of SDG6. The General Economic Division (GED) of Planning Commission aligned SDGs with the country's Five Year Plans and mapped the lead implementing and associated ministries/Divisions well ahead by September 2016. COVID 19 pandemic, however, has proved a challenge in maintaining progress which has been compounded by relative loss of focus by some implementing agencies in selection of proper projects and ensuring required resource allocation.

With only 8 years of SDG timeline remaining, progress on WASH targets are of serious concern. On the NPT 17 (SDG Indicator 6.1.1) i.e. **safe drinking water**, national achievement as of 2021 is only **59%** (JMP, 2021) against the target of 100%.

Progress in the sanitation sub-sector too is a matter of concern. During the preceding MDG-era, eliminating open defecation was a laudable success story for Bangladesh in South Asia. But NPT 18 sets the target as 100% population using **safely managed sanitation** services (SDG Indicator 6.2.1). However, progress on this indicator of safely managed sanitation as of 2021 is only **39%** - rural 42% and urban 34% – (JMP, 2021).

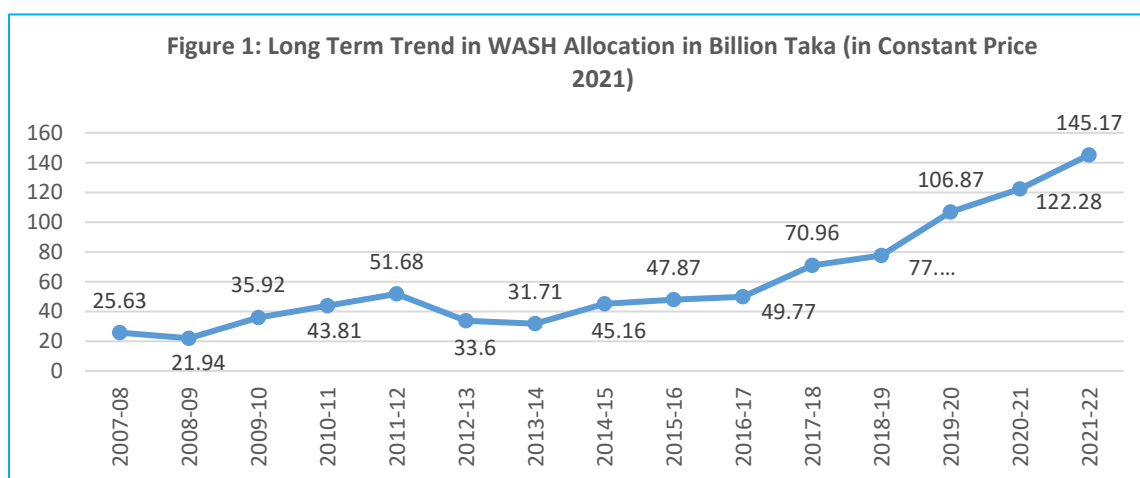
Progress on the other basic indicator for status of hygiene is only 58% and on the more limited indicator of ‘without soap or water’, national achievement is only 36% (JMP 2021). Bangladesh position is second from bottom among South Asian countries. All these implies that Bangladesh has to go a long way to achieve SDGs in respect of safe water, safely managed sanitation and hygiene.

This policy brief examines budgetary trends of the Government of Bangladesh in terms of annual development programme (ADP) allocation and expenditure in WASH sector to assess gaps and challenges in achieving SDG 6 targets in time.

Findings from Budget-Tracking on WASH

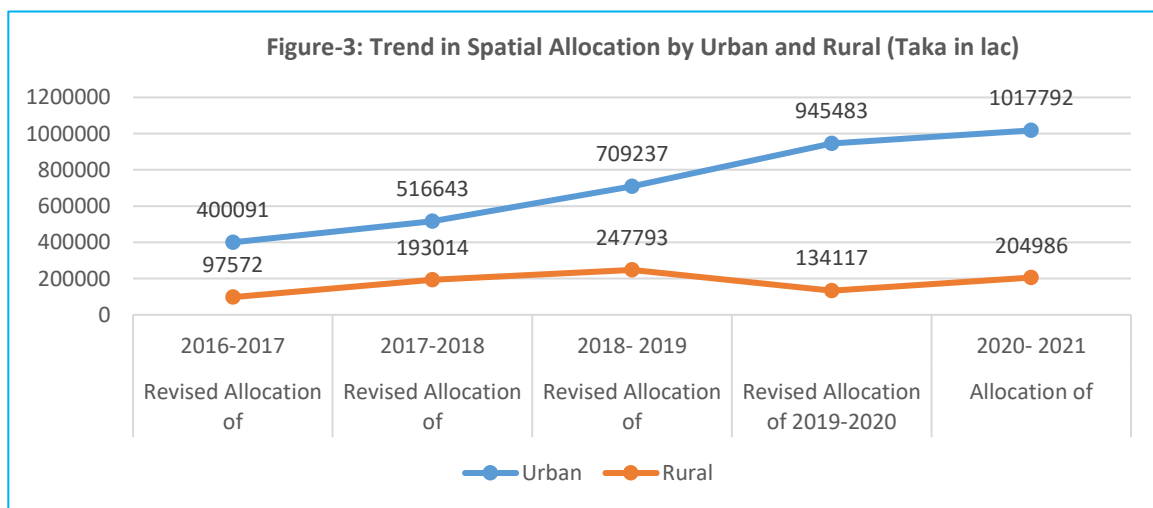
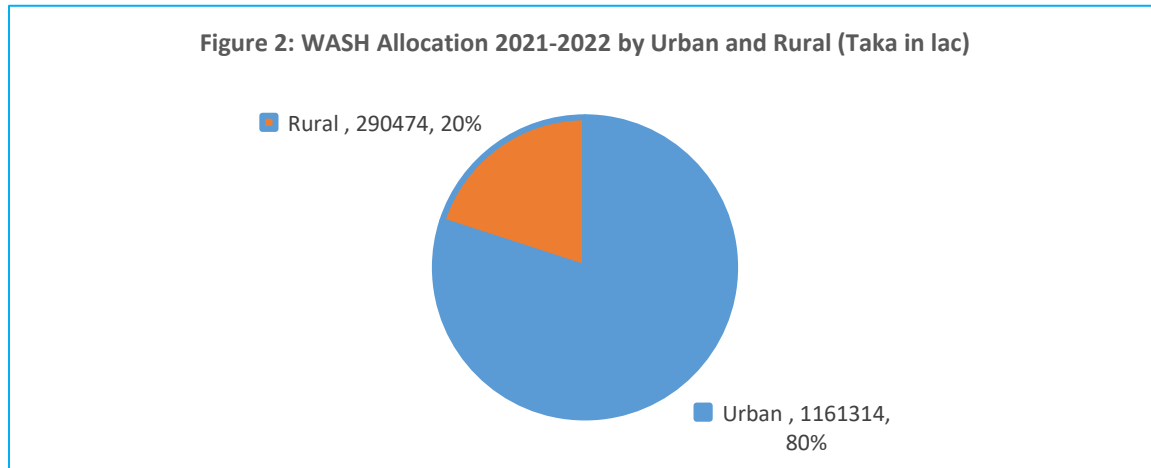
1. Budgetary Trend in WASH ADP allocation:

Overall budgetary allocation on WASH has been on an upward trend (Figure 1) though the question of adequacy remains in terms of WASH allocation as a proportion of total budget. In FY2021-22, WASH allocations was 5.44% (Taka 14,518 crore) of total ADP allocation (Taka 266,793 crore).



2. Inequitable spatial allocation:

Spatial disaggregation of WASH allocation show the continuing entrenched nature of spatial distribution with rural accounting for only 20% of allocation in 2020-21 (Figure 2). The issue has been repeatedly raised over the years but no change has been forthcoming (Figure 3).



3. Downward trend in allocation trend to hard-to-reach area:

Figure 4 shows the downward trend of both allocation and expenditure of WASH allocation in hard-to-reach area except an atypical sharp rise in FY 2020-21, the year that saw the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The sharp rise may be explained by the pandemic-induced focus on hygiene though expenditure fell 16% against allocation target. However, barely a year later, WASH allocations in hard-to-reach areas fell drastically again in FY202-22 with allocations for these areas being 72% below the level five years earlier threshold (FY2016-17).

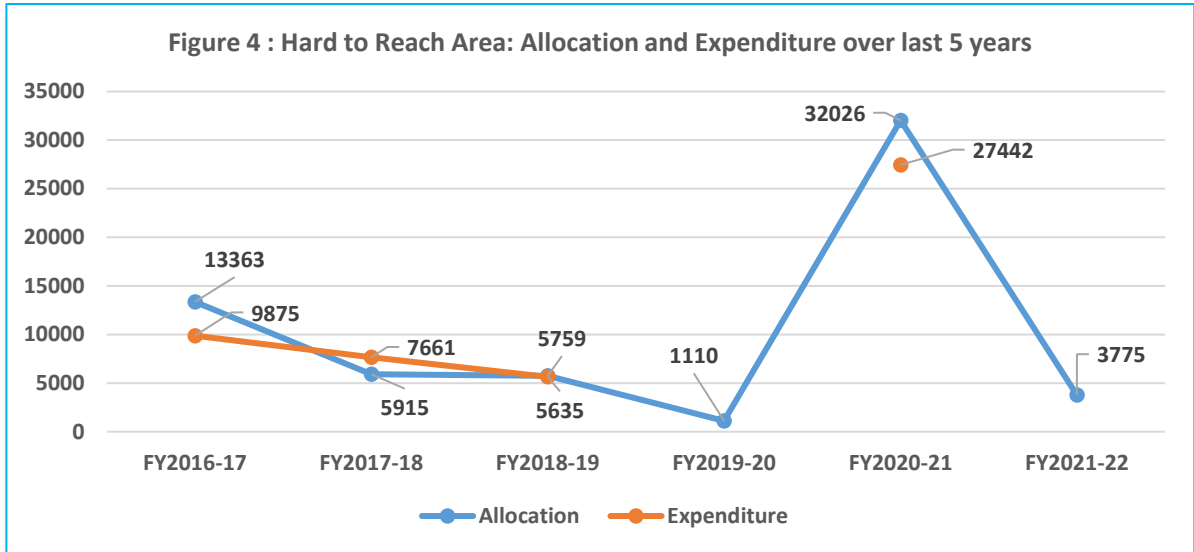
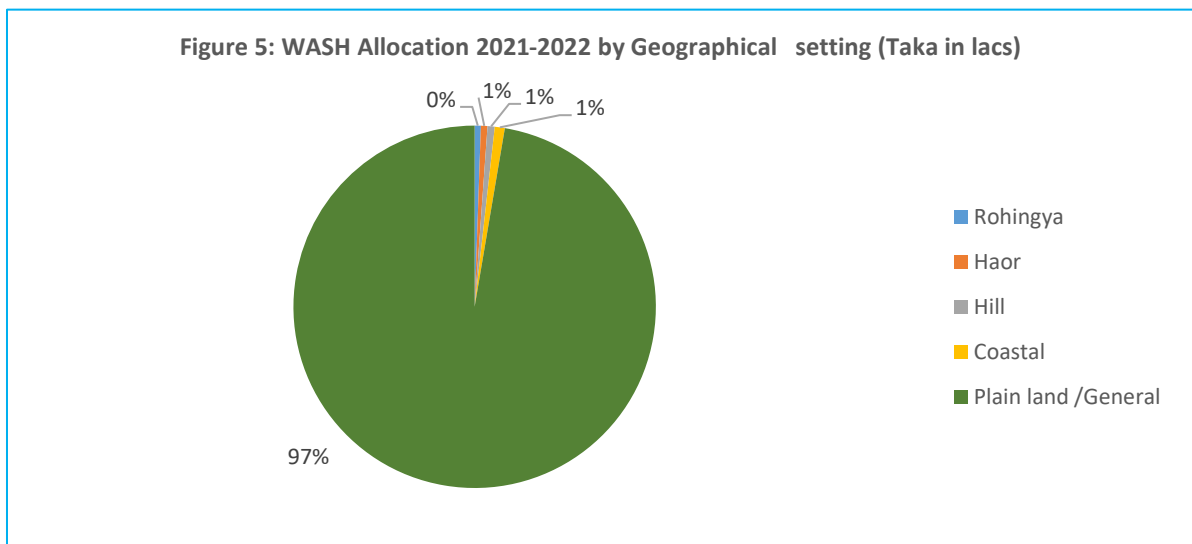
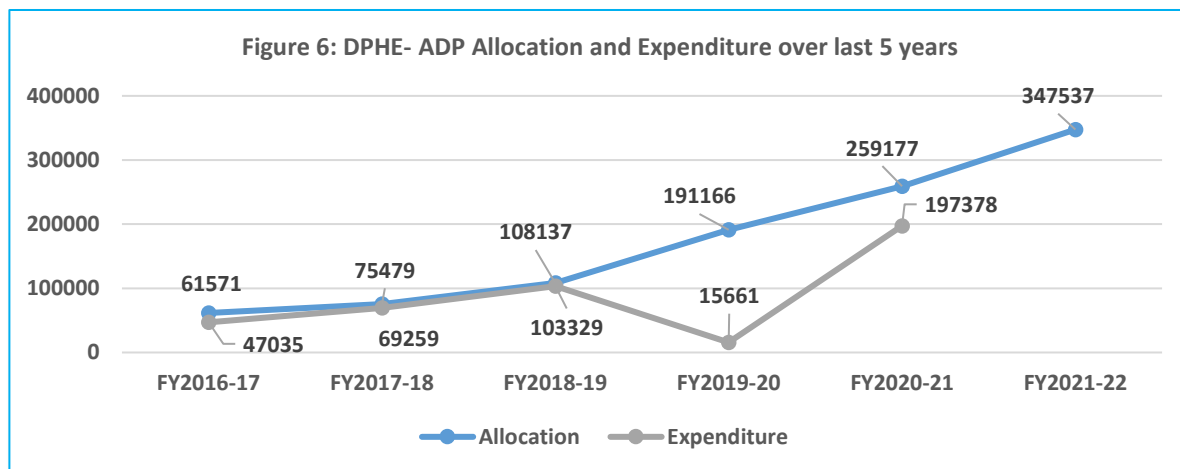


Figure 5 shows that only around 3% (3,775 crore) of total WASH budget under ADP of FY2021-22 was towards hard-to-reach area including Rohingya refugee camps. Such a low percentage calls into question the priorities of of the concerned agency to achieve SDG6 and run counter to the inclusivity principle highlighted in the 8th Five Year Plan.



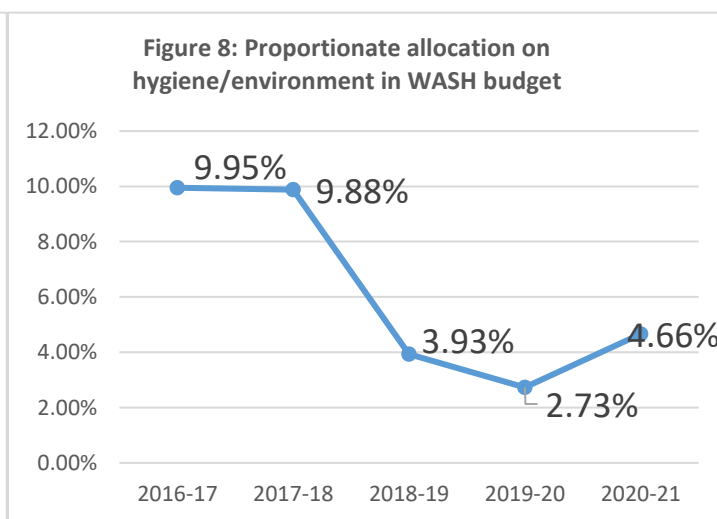
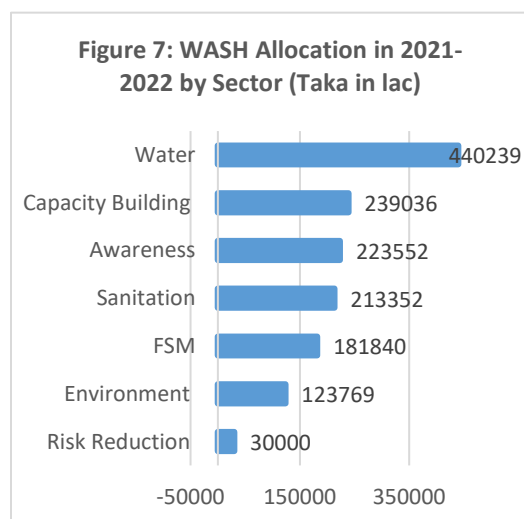
4. Continued increase in DPHE budget towards rural:

The WASH responsibility for rural and secondary towns falls on DPHE. The ADP allocation shows an upward trend due to continued advocacy and awareness. Focus on more capacity building and strengthening of DPHE will unlock services for rural people. Figure 6 demonstrates the upward trend of budget allocation towards DPHE over the years:



5. Imbalance in sub-sectoral WASH allocations:

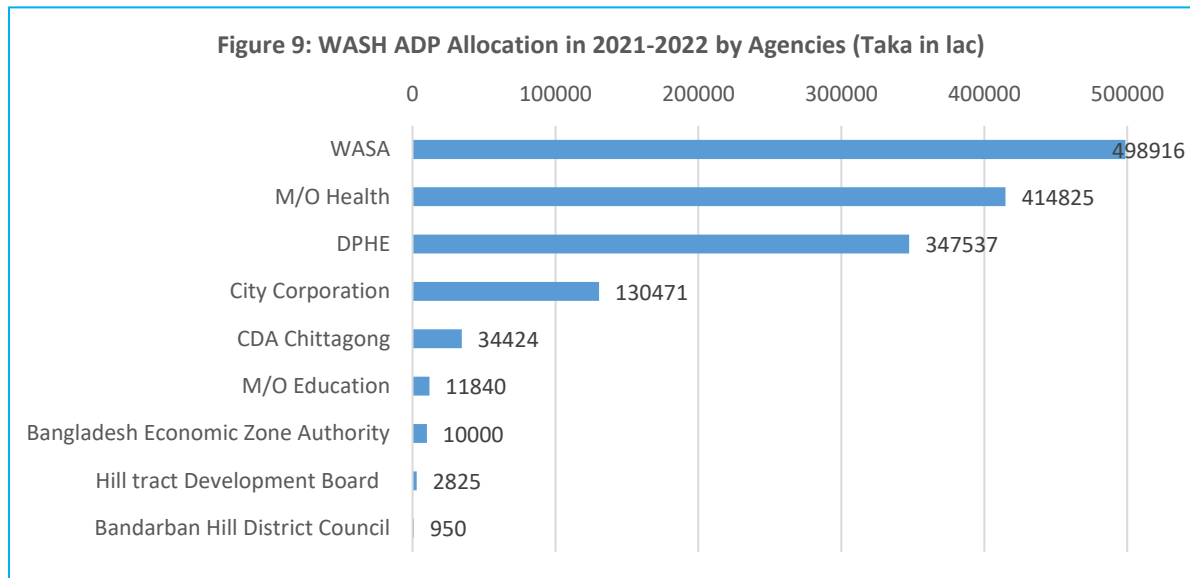
Disaggregated data shows that the highest allocation of FY2021-22 ADP goes to the WASH sub-sector of water as usual (Figure 7). WASH ADP allocations on capacity building and awareness raising in 2020-21 was relatively high and may have been a response to the Covid-19 crisis as some agency needed support to enhance capacity as well as behavioral change communications was urgently needed for sanitation and hygiene practices. Successful environmental and risk reduction projects should be scaled up in country’s climate and disaster hotspots. However, Hygiene has been overlooked in 2021-22 budget like the previous years (Figure 8), though the awareness raising allocation may be linked to this sub-sector.



6. WASA receives highest allocation as before:

Figure 9 shows that WASA (in four major cities only) maintains the trend of getting highest ADP allocations. Responding to the Covid-19 crisis, in FY 2020-21, considerable allocation has been to MoHFW for advocacy and awareness building. The question though remains whether the awareness raising responsibility should only fall on MoHFW or also be allocated to other agencies in particular urban local

governments. DPHE which is responsible for rural and secondary towns receives the 3rd highest allocation.



7. Dhaka WASA receives the highest allocation:

Figure 10 shows that among four WASAs, Dhaka WASA receives the highest allocation (61% of allocation against 4 WASAs) as usual while Khulna WASA remains at the bottom as before with only 3%.

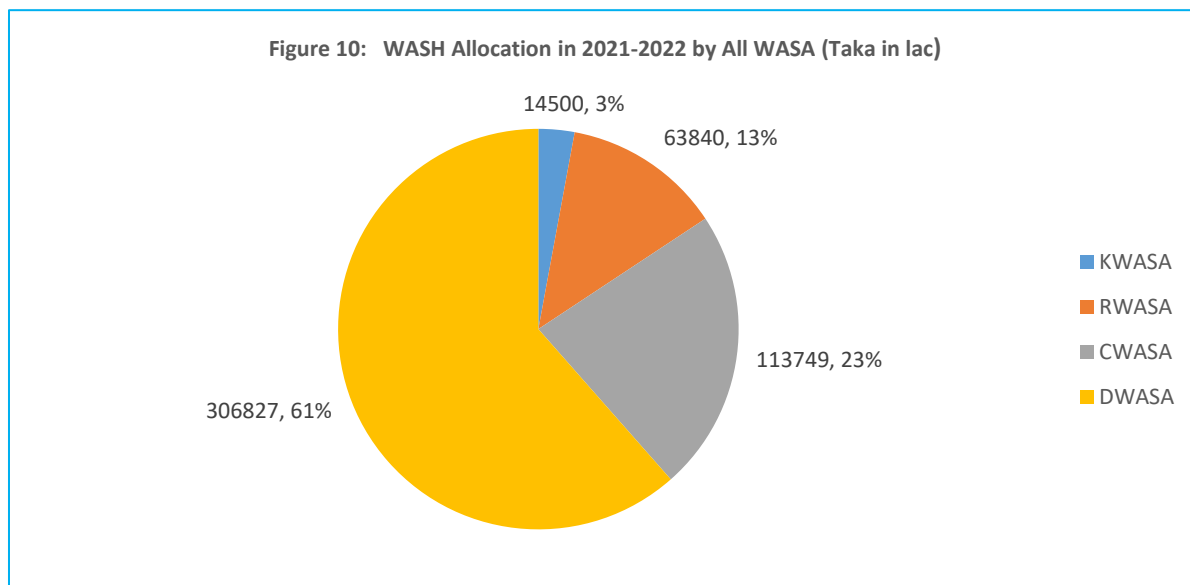


Figure 11 shows contrasting trends in allocation for the four WASAs. Dhaka WASA's ADP allocation showed a big upward jump over 2019-20 to cover cost of implementation delays in its big projects. C,WASA saw a drop in 2020-21 allocations over 2019-20 while Rajshahi saw a rise. Khulna in the South-West region, affected by

natural calamities and a climate hotspot receives a paltry allocation unchanged over the years.

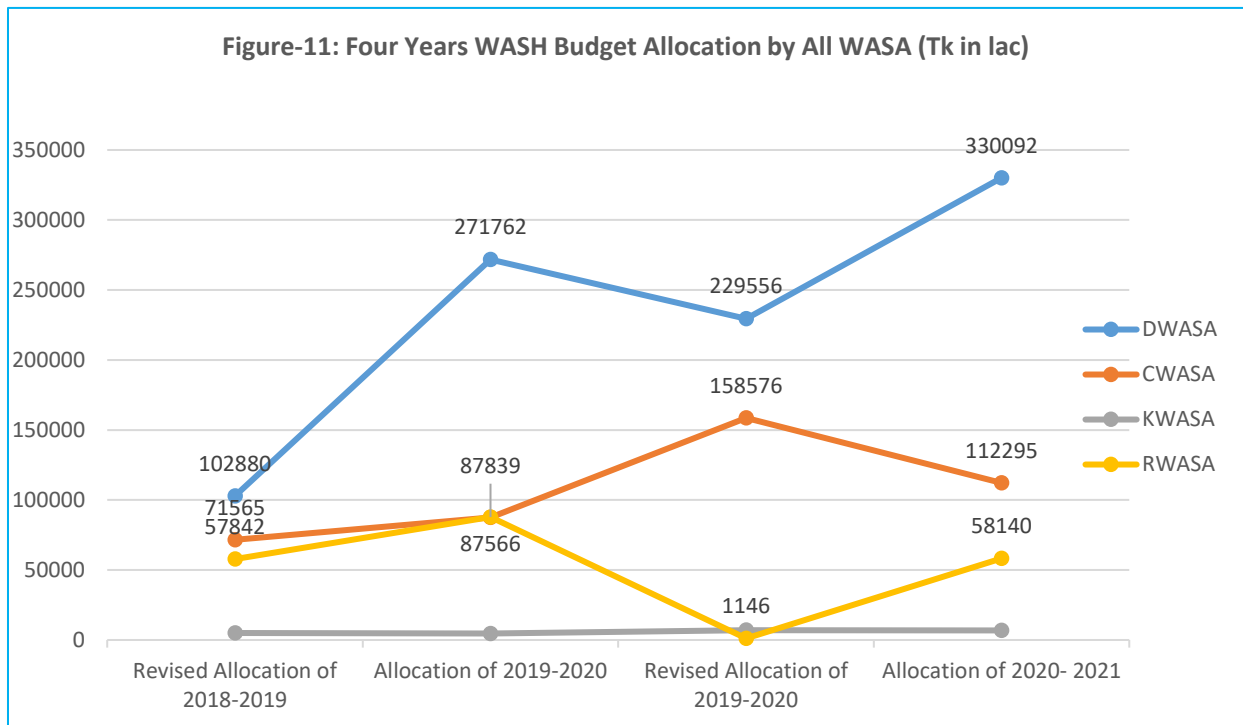
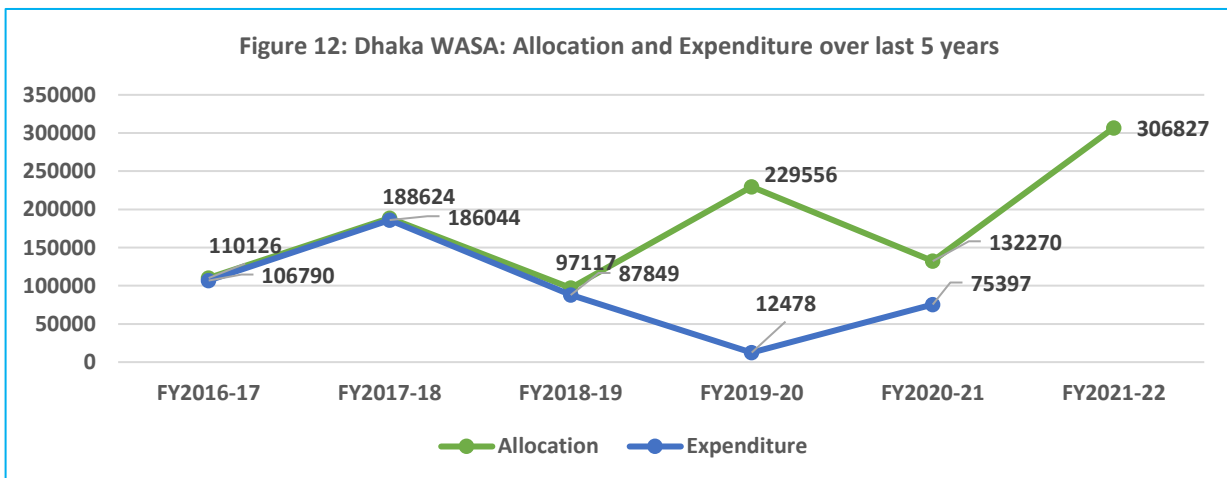


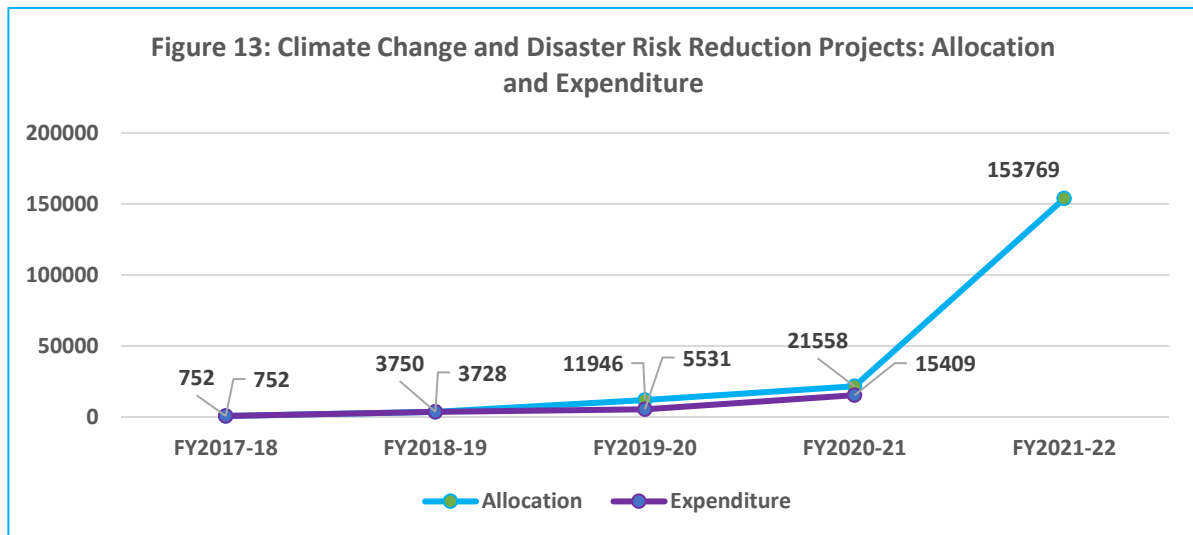
Figure 12 brings out a striking picture of need for performance enhancement. Dhaka WASA gets the highest allocation every year but the agency lags to utilize the full budget. Proper attention is required to enhance the performance.



8. Commendable focus on climate change and disaster risk reduction:

Post-Covid-19, budgetary allocations on climate change and disaster risk reduction projects has shown an upward trend. However, implementation capacity remains a

concern as seen in the expenditure trend. The expenditure data for FY2021-22 is not yet available but will be analyzed later.



9. Percentage of WASH allocation in ADP:

Analysis shows that In FY 2021-22 allocation to WASH sector was 5.44% (Taka 14,517 crore) in respect of total ADP allocation (Taka 266,793 crore). The allocation trend as shared in different graphs implies that proper attention are not paid in selecting ADP projects and the government’s laudable policies and plans are not followed and translated to actions.

Recommendations

1. Bangladesh had significant and above-average achievements in MDG-era targets, but it is at risk of being off-track on the SDG-era targets of safe water and safely managed sanitation. A change in the implementation mind-set and greater attention to selection of effective ADP projects by various agencies and implementing entities is essential to ensure returning to on-track trajectory of SDG 6.1.1 and SDG 6.2.1
2. Despite rising WASH allocations in the budget, entrenched spatial inequities in allocation and implementation capacity continue to belie the inclusivity principle that is central to the government’s SDG commitments. In the short-run, increased allocations for hard-to-reach areas are a priority. In the medium-term, redressing intra-urban allocation inequities, particularly among the four WASAs has to be a priority.

3. DWASA's dominance in WASH ADP allocations stands in contrast to entrenched low performance as evident in continuous project delays and cost over-runs. Resolving this governance challenge is a priority to ensure more effective utilization of WASH ADP allocations.
4. Hygiene received a temporary boost in policy and budgetary attention due to the pandemic but is already at risk of losing this policy momentum. The hygiene agenda is critical not only to contain the pandemic but also to the post-Covid realities of urban health, school health and women's health. A fresh look at post Covid-19 hygiene agenda is a priority.
5. WASH ADP allocations have begun to prioritize climate change and disaster risk reduction. This is a positive trend and needs to be strengthened through a mapping of emerging climate hotspots and development of customized micro-plans to address the WASH vulnerabilities specific to the hotspots.
6. FSM allocations in ADP are important for achieving SDG-era WASH targets. Such allocations should continue and judiciously increased COVID 19 as a pandemic is still much active. Hence no allocation for FY2021-22 for hygiene is not a good sign. So, sufficient amount should be allocated in future budget for hygiene and waste management in cities and towns.
7. Bangladesh has been successful in stopping open defecation. Now time is for a graduation from pit latrine (1-3) in the villages to more safe defecation/ sanitary latrine is required. LGD should pay more attention to it and highlight FSM through differential and targeted plans for metropolitan centres and secondary towns.
8. Government has adopted a policy of expanding urban facilities in the villages to counter excessive migration to the cities. The expansion of such facilities appears to be occurring in a haphazard and unplanned manner without adequate consideration of WASH challenges. There is a need for an urgent plan to develop a WASH perspective for urbanized villages within the remaining years of the 8th FYP.