



Abu Said is a visually impaired resident of Ershadnagar - using hand rails and tactile paving to navigate the WASH block.

Inclusive WASH for the differently-abled in low-income urban communities

Deep dive into the Ershadnagar at the heart of Dhaka

Social disparity in WASH equity in low-income urban centers

Bangladesh has experienced rapid urbanization over the past few decades, with a significant portion of the population migrating from rural areas to cities in search of better economic opportunities. In particular, Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, has witnessed a substantial influx of migrants. And this huge populations are residing mostly in low income communities. According to a baseline study in 2018, **all residents in the communities were using unhygienic hanging toilets close to their houses.**

Privacy and safety were the major concerns due to **poor physical structure and location** of the toilets, especially for the differently-abled. Most community members were **using illegal water connections and had to pay more** for getting water. Previously, they collected water from ring wells which was not safe for them. Furthermore, they had very **little knowledge on personal hygiene.**

Our work

We constructed an inclusive WASH block for supporting differently-abled people. Currently catering to 40 people, among whom 13 are with different disabilities. The WASH block follow our community-led ethos and is operated and maintained by the community people through funds they generate themselves; with an initial investment being made by WaterAid. The inclusive WASH block features a range of amenities geared towards catering to most types of disabilities including a ramp with hand railing, provisions for visual impairment, low height electric switch board, doors with special lock systems, grab rails in toilet chambers, safely disposable system of used menstrual hygiene products, running water with specialised tap, among other accessible and user friendly amenities.

Towards equitable community

The inclusive WASH block has brought about a significant transformation for the differently-abled people. It reduced disease burdens and economic expenditures while promoting personal dignity, safety, and alleviating social stigma - amplifying inclusivity. Our work also reduced caregiver burdens through providing avenues for self-sufficiency. Through these efforts, we have made a pathway for creating a more equitable society where everyone can thrive.