Healthcare facilities with limited or no provisions for clean water and functioning toilets affects the quality of care

According to the Global Climate Risk Index by German Watch (2021), Bangladesh ranked 7th among the top 10 most affected countries (2000-2019) in terms of the Long-Term Climate Risk Index (CRI).

The increasing frequency and greater magnitude of natural disasters due to climatic conditions are adversely affecting the functionality of Health Care Facilities (HCFs), especially in climate-vulnerable locations. Access to effective water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in HCFs is critical for ensuring reliable health services, including Infection Prevention and Control (IPC). But inadequate WASH provisions in HCFs, which are vulnerable to disaster risks results in compromised access to quality care.

Our work

WaterAid Bangladesh undertook an initiative between January 2021 and March 2023 in the public hospitals of the Gaibandha district and sub-district. The main goal was to enhance the resilience of HCFs by improving WASH and IPC facilities. These hospitals cater to mostly low-income communities. As part of the initiative, selected HCFs were retrofitted and upgraded to withstand the impacts of climate change and infectious disease outbreak. Additionally, awareness campaigns on health hygiene and IPC were conducted, targeting staff, patients, and visitors of the HCFs to enhance their knowledge.

WaterAid also stewarded the development of a manual on WASH and IPC for HCFs, along with an action plan to scale up WASH and IPC services, thereby improving overall service delivery.

Climate resilience and sustainability of HCFs

This comprehensive approach has resulted in reduced healthcare-associated infections, minimized disease transmission, and enhanced infection prevention measures. The success of the intervention has primed this approach for replication across government health systems - showcasing how our phased-out programmes can be sustained overtime.

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