

Policy Brief

WASH budget scenario in proposed National Budget FY 2020-21

Dhaka, 28 June 2020



Proposed Annual budget for FY 2020-2021 (placed in the Parliament) needs to allocate required budget for WASH sector focusing on Hygiene in the wake of deadly COVID-19 pandemic. While establishing equity and justice by reducing long-standing inequities between urban and rural, and within the urban centres.

- The steady growth and upward trend in WASH budget allocation continues in FY2020-21 Annual Development Programme (ADP) like the previous years with an increase of Tk1431.78 crore from revised ADP of FY2019-20. Apart from ADP allocation, health sector receives a block fund of Tk10,000 crore to handle COVID-19 pandemic impacts. This year ADP involves Tk205,145 crore with focus on transport, education, agriculture sectors including health.
- According to proposed budget of FY 2020-21, the Health Services division would get a total of Tk22,883 crore, containing operating expenditure (Tk12,830 crore) and development expenditure (Tk10,053 crore) from the ADP. On the other hand, the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division will get a total of Tk6,363 crore for operating expenditure (Tk3,917 crore) and development expenditure (Tk2,446 crore).
- Focusing on human resource development the budget has proposed Tk400.58 crore to Health Service Division and Tk203.97 crore to Medical Education and Family Welfare Division for personnel training.
- However, government's commitment on hygiene issue is not so clear. This foremost area recognized as a solution and first line of defense to avoid COVID-19 transmission has not yet received proper attention as a sub-sector within WASH. Government's ADP

allocation still remains in some awareness creating and knowledge sharing activities, and environmental issues, and hardly covering the full essence and spirit needed on hygiene in true sense.

- Moreover, it was urged in a press conference Pre-budget Policy Brief (published on 08 June 2020) that budget must prioritize hygiene as a key area in the light COVID-19 experience and complexities of SDG 6 attainment. Request was made to make availability of clean water and soap in every household. Demonstration of water and basin with soap for hand-wash in public places, markets, bus stoppages, etc. was also recommended.

FY 2019-20 Budget put priority on sanitation and overlooked hygiene. Similarly, in FY 2020-21 water and sanitation got larger share whereas hygiene receives a small amount sharing with some environmental initiatives. Figure-1 below finds little change in allocation within the WASH sub-sectors in last 5 years including FY2020-21. However, there is steady rise in allocation of Faecal Sludge Management (FSM), a positive sign indeed.

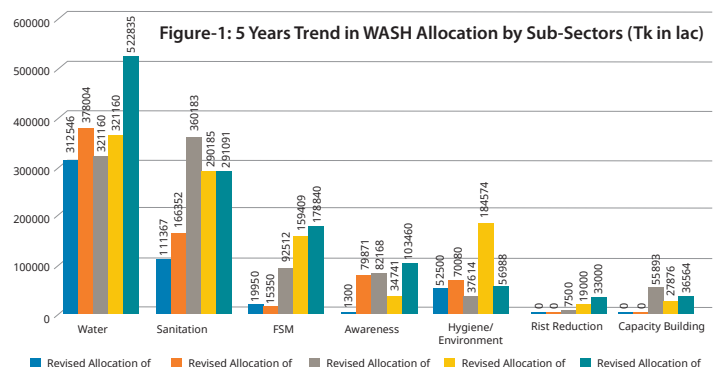
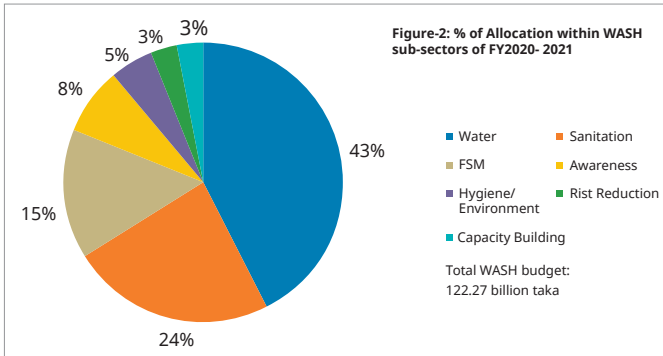
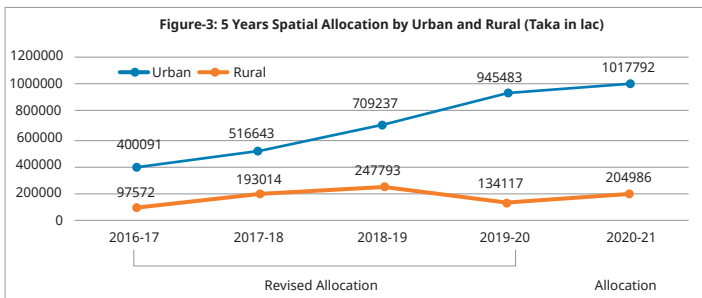


Figure-2 below shows that 43% of FY2020-21 WASH allocation goes to make drinking water available where hygiene gets only <5% and capacity building 3% only.



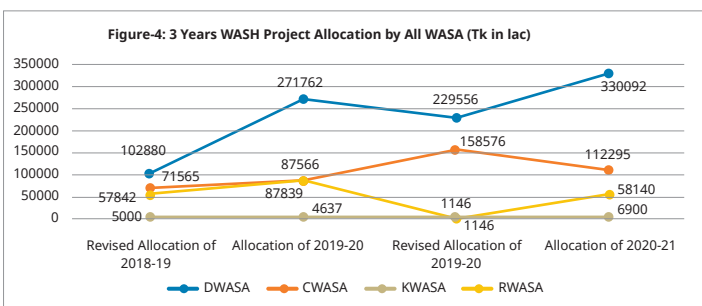
Spatial inequities between and among urban and rural, four WASAs and 11 City Corporations remain constant as shown in the figures 3, 4 & 5. But equity and justice need to be upheld in all such budget distributions in order to attain SDG 6 and government's commitments.

Figure-3 below shows how the gap of deliveries between urban and rural has been widened over the years.

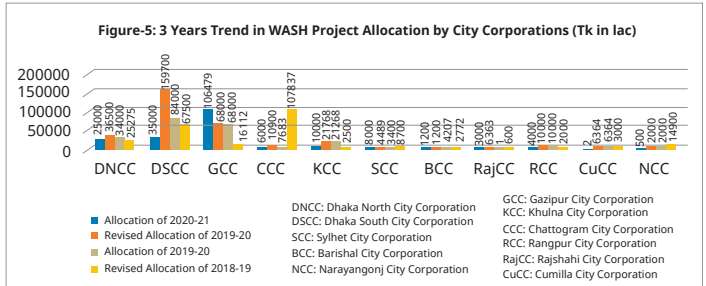


Study also reveals that in five years' period there happens to be almost no change in Urban (80% - 83%) and Rural (20% - 17%) allocation.

Khulna WASA has been deprived continuously in last three allocations (Figure-4). FY2020-21 is no exception. Rajshahi WASA trend is fluctuating. Big establishment projects, e.g., Dasherbandi Sewerage Treatment Plant and Syadabad Water Treatment Plant, of Dhaka WASA bring larger share but management has miserably failed to complete the projects within the time frame.



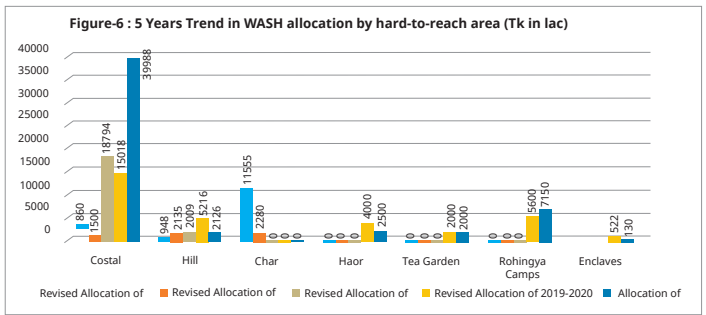
It is Gazipur City Corporation who receives unparalleled allocation in proposed FY2020-21. Even Chattogram known as country's second capital receives very little amount. On the other hand, huge amount, almost double, was allocated for DSCC which is unprecedented in revision case (revised FY2019-20) just few months of budget closing. Similar thing happened for Chattogram during revised budget of FY 2018-19. To uphold equity and justice there is no other alternative but to follow a guideline of equitable distribution of resources for the citizens all over the country.



Capacity of officials and management engaged in implementing ADP projects needs to be enhanced. Strong monitoring and supervision are important for timely completion of projects to deliver the fruits of projects undertaken.

Due attention is required to WASH delivery in hard to reach areas of the country. Figure-6 shows that over the years the people of these remote areas have been deprived. A handsome proposed allocation in FY2020-21 in the coastal belt is seen may be because of a response to cyclone Amphan that hit the land on 20 May 2020. There is some fund for the enclaves too.

Efficient implementation of future projects is key to ensuring WASH access. It is worth noting that DPHE has initiated a number of projects for hard to reach areas that are listed in the green pages of the ADP (unapproved projects with no allocation in the current ADP). Proper steps should be taken to smoothly roll out these projects ensuring efficiency in implementation.

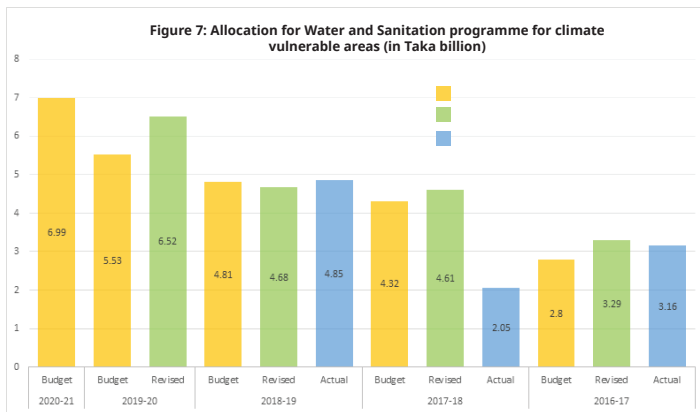


There are major improvements in WASH allocation for climate vulnerable areas. It is encouraging to note that the government has been preparing a climate budget to track public expenditure on

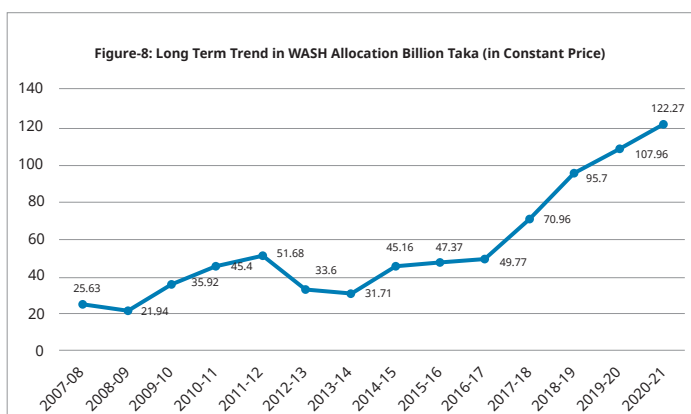
climate for the last few years. Water and Sanitation programme for climate vulnerable areas is covered in this exercise, in line with the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

This year, the water and sanitation programme for climate vulnerable areas has received an allocation of nearly Tk 700 crore, a 26% increase from last year (Figure 7). The past figures show that there is a tendency to allocate a higher amount in the revised budget, in contrast to other sectors where revised allocations are generally lower.

Although the vast majority of the current allocation on water and sanitation programme is for Local Government Division (LGD), there is zero allocation for the Health Services division. This does not bode well for WASH in local healthcare facilities, undermining service delivery for the marginalized groups.



The upward trend (Figure-8) in WASH budget allocation is praiseworthy. This is a good reflection of the commitment of government in WASH sector.



Despite the upward trend over the last decade in WASH allocation it remains on the bottom on attention levels when compared with growth of GDP and development budget.

Gaps and Challenges

- Spatial inequity remains unchanged – Rural vs Urban, among the 4 WASAs, among the City Corporations, etc. Poor shouldn't be left at the mercy of market system during COVID-19 situation.
- WASH services to hard-to-reach area yet to be ensured.
- Hygiene is not recognized properly, remains mostly untouched issue though maintaining hygiene is the main focus area to fight COVID-19.
- Budget for infrastructure development is required, but capacity development remains an issue as not adequately addressed.
- Complexities of implementation of SDG 6 remains as a major challenge.
- Political commitment needs to be ensured and implemented.

Recommendations

Recommendations here endorse too those made in the last policy brief.

- Prioritise hygiene as a vital tool of public health and epidemic preparedness, and invest in large-scale nationwide hygiene campaign and installation of public handwashing points with soap and water.
- Increase investment in WASH, including hygiene and WASH in health care facilities, as a priority of COVID-19 prevention and response as well as to build resilience against future disease outbreaks, with a particular focus on hard-to-reach areas and other marginalized groups.
- Recognize hygiene as an agenda and a sub-sector of WASH, and identify the actions under it including providing support to the Municipal waste cleaners and waste management personnel treating them as the front-line fighters to reduce nationwide infection of COVID-19.
- Track actual expenditure of WASH allocation systematically to improve targeting and decision-making around WASH investment to cater actual needs of citizens.
- Capacity of officials in implementation of projects to be enhanced. Case study may be conducted to identify the root causes of delay in completion of projects.
- Address the extreme disparities in access and affordability to clean water between highly subsidised urban customers and marginalised populations in slums and low income communities, and other hard-to-reach areas.
- Some portion of block fund kept in health budget may be used for implementation of these recommendations to fight COVID-19.