

PRO POOR STRATEGY **for** **Water and Sanitation Sector** **in Bangladesh**



Unit for Policy Implementation (UPI)

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1. **Introduction:**

1. The Pro-poor Strategy for water and sanitation services has been developed in the recognition of two major needs. Firstly, there is a need for 'direct attack on poverty' as the benefits of growth are not distributed equitably. Secondly, the National Policy for Safe Water Supply and Sanitation, 1998 provides for a 'safety-net' for hardcore poor in conjunction with reducing subsidies overtime.

2. While annual growth rate of national income is 5 %, the annual decline rate in income poverty is only 1 %. The benefit of increased income does not lead to proportionate reduction in poverty, as benefits are not distributed equitably. The annual growth rate in Gini Index of Inequality is 2.1 %. The poor are still 50 % and hardcore poor 20 % of total population. While Drinking Water coverage is about 75 %, 97 % of country's population depends on groundwater as drinking water source. About 22 million households of the country get drinking water from about 10 million tubewells. However, 9 million of these tubewells are 'privately' owned. Thus, it leaves only 1 million 'community' tubewells for about 13 million households in the country, conveying that a large number of poor in the country do not have ownership of a drinking water asset and that they are dependent largely on economically well to do people for their drinking water needs. On the Sanitation front, there is 40 % coverage at present and of the uncovered 60 % households, 73 % cite 'lack of money' as the reason for not having a latrine. The incidence of Child Mortality of 94 per thousand live births and Infant Mortality of Sixty-six per thousand live births is also highest amongst the hardcore poor. This call for a '**Direct Attack on Poverty**' by '*putting the last one first*', against an approach of general increase in investment in pro-poor sectors.

2. **Pro-poor Strategy for water and sanitation sector:**

3. In above context, the Pro-poor Strategy for drinking water is based on identifying clusters or habitations whose basic minimum need for drinking water is not met and then having a '**Direct Attack on Poverty**' by first identifying the hardcore poor within them and then providing them with Basic Minimum Service Level at the earliest with preference in resource allocation, cost-sharing, voice in decision-making and responsibilities of O & M. While drinking water is a community asset, sanitation is individual asset. The Pro-poor strategy for sanitation is based on identifying all hardcore poor households whose basic minimum need for sanitation is not met and then providing them the basic minimum service level by giving them preference in resource allocation.

4. Thus the Pro-poor strategy for water and sanitation rests on four pillars of (1) Operational Definition of Hardcore Poor households (2) Definition of Basic Minimum Service Level (3) Targeting and Organising the Hardcore Poor households, and (4) Mechanism for Administering Subsidies. This strategy is the outcome of a series of multistage consultations with the grassroots beneficiaries, local government leaders, government officials, policy makers, NGOs and development partners.

3. Operational Definition of Hardcore poor households:

5. While the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics defines Poverty and Extreme Poverty on the basis of first defining the subsistence-level consumption basket and its cost and then using the Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HHES) to find out households whose income is below that level, it is difficult to use that definition to identify target groups for any poverty reduction programme. It would require a population survey through a detailed questionnaire to estimate household incomes of all households in the project-area. It would be both time-consuming and costly. Thus the first pillar of the strategy for direct attack on poverty rests on preparing an operational definition of hardcore poor. A definition, which can be easily understood and implemented by Local Govt. Institutions, and, for which, a time consuming and expensive survey is not required.

6. Based on the findings of the detailed study and countrywide consultations, the following set of criteria will be followed by the local government institutions for identifying the hardcore poor households for implementing water and sanitation services. The operational definition lays emphasis on physical attributes like landlessness and homelessness as a measure of Income and therefore of Poverty. The focus is mainly on the hardcore poor households since they are the prime target group of the subsidized program of the government. The criteria will ensure that only the targeted group receives the benefits of the government subsidized water and sanitation services.

7. The criteria have been classified into two groups: i) Eligibility criteria and ii) Exclusion criteria. Four 'Eligibility' and two 'Exclusion' criteria have been set for the identification of hardcore poor households. The criteria are very simple and can easily be measured through simple observation. Note that the household is the unit of measurement for these criteria.

8. The strategy suggests relaxing these criteria for identification of hardcore poor households in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and saline-prone coastal areas.

a. Eligibility criteria:

1. Landless households
2. Pavement dwellers/homeless
3. Main earning person or the head of family is day laborer, owning less than 50 decimal of agriculture land or residing in a rented premise lesser than 200 square feet, and, having no fixed source of income.
4. Households headed by Disabled or Females or Old aged (65+ years) persons.

9. If the answer to any of the above criteria is 'yes', the household will be treated as hardcore poor to give priority in subsidized WATSAN services, unless excluded by the 'Exclusion-criteria'.

b. Exclusion criteria:

1. The households owning more than 1 acre of land (cultivable and homestead) will be excluded from the list.
2. The households with income level greater than the income corresponding to the ‘Poverty-line’¹ definition would be excluded from the list.

4. Basic Minimum Level of Service:

10. The Basic Minimum level of service for water and sanitation up to which the government would provide subsidy to the hardcore poor (and beyond which, there would be no subsidies) is defined as follows:

a. Drinking Water:

- For the purpose of drinking, cooking and personal hygiene, the basic minimum level of service is defined as 20 litres per capita per day.
- The safe drinking water source should be within 50 meters of household premise.
- The drinking water must meet the national water quality standards.

b. Sanitation:

11. A ‘**hygienic latrine**’ will mean to include ‘**all**’ of the following:

1. Confinement of feces
2. Sealing of the passage between the squat hole and the pit to effectively block the pathways for flies and other insect vectors thereby breaking the cycle of disease transmission
3. Venting out of foul gases generated in the pit through a properly positioned vent pipe to keep the latrine odor free and encourage continual use of the hygienic latrine

12. The ‘Basic Minimum Service Level’ for Sanitation is defined as **one ‘hygienic latrine’ for each household.**

13. However, if it is not possible to have one ‘hygienic latrine’ for each household due to lack of space or other reasons, then such households can either use “others’ latrines”, **subject to a maximum of two households (or 10 persons) for one latrine** or “community latrines”, **subject to a maximum of 10 persons per latrine.**

¹ As per its recent estimates of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Poverty line is defined as income level below Taka 622 per person per month for urban areas and Taka 551 per person per month for rural areas, on the basis of ‘Household Income and Expenditure Survey’.

5. Targeting and Organizing the Hardcore poor Households:

14. The National Policy for Water Supply and Sanitation Sector, 1998 provides for decentralization of financial and administrative authority to local government institutions (LGIs) in management of water and sanitation services. Accordingly, the pro-poor strategy provides that LGIs-Union Parishads (UPs)/ Pourashavas and City Corporations would have the authority and responsibility of targeting and organizing the hardcore poor households. It also provides for giving a '*voice of the poor*' in decision-making by LGIs. For this purpose the following strategies are suggested.

15. Under the leadership of the Union Parishads, the *Gram Sarkars* will prepare a '*List of Eligible households*' at the ward level, as per the Eligibility and Exclusion criteria set out in Section 1, in collaboration with development workers and civil society members. The *Gram Sarkars* will prepare the list in its meeting in the presence of government officials living in the ward. After preparing the list, the Gram Sarkars will present it to the Union Parishads for scrutiny and approval. The Union Parishads must display the list on their notice boards. Objections would be invited to check the correctness of the list. The Upazila Parishads will monitor the entire process. If there is any discrepancy identified in the list, the Upazila Parishads will intervene and take decision for correction and finalization of '*List of Eligible Households*'.

16. The similar strategy will be applied for Pourashavas and City Corporations. The Ward Committees/Ward commissioners will prepare the list in collaboration with development workers and civil society members and present it to the meeting of the Pourashava and City Corporation for scrutiny and approval. The Pourashavas and City Corporations must display the list on their notice boards. Objections would be invited to check the correctness of the list. The Pourashavas and City Corporations will monitor the entire process.

17. Different habitation clusters in the village will be identified. The different layers of habitations at the Union Parishad level can be reflected as follows:



18. The *Gram Sarkars* will perform the job of identifying clusters and assessing whether their Basic Minimum Service Level (BMSL) is met or not. This would be done for Drinking Water and Sanitation separately and will involve following stages:

a. **Drinking Water supply:**

- i) Identify the number of households, which have private water points.
- ii) Identify the number of households, which do not have private water points. These households use either community water points or other's water points.
- iii) Identify the number of community water points in the cluster.
- iv) Divide the number of households (which do not have private water points) by the number of community water points.

- v) If the figure is below 10, the cluster will be identified as “**Cluster below BMSL**”, and, if it is above 10 the cluster will be identified as “**Cluster above BMSL**”

19. Thus, there will be two types of clusters: i) clusters above the BMSL and ii) clusters below BMSL. The rationales for the identification of clusters are: i) to increase the coverage of overall water supply, ii) to ensure supply for the poor and hardcore poor households and iii) to ensure subsidy for the hardcore poor households. The clusters below the BMSL will get priority in having community water points from DPHE or other development partners.

20. In a cluster the households with private water point will be known as ‘**Non User Group**’, while the households without private water point will be known as ‘**User Group**’. Among the User Group there are hardcore poor households, which will be named as ‘**Target Group**’.

21. **The strategy would be to provide *only* the ‘Target Group’ of the ‘clusters below the BMSL’ with subsidy. The target group of clusters above BMSL will not get subsidy, irrespective of whether they are poor/hardcore poor.**

22. In each cluster, a person will be elected or selected from the ‘Target Group’ to raise the voice of the poorer section of the community regarding the selection of the water point and other necessary issues of capital contribution, O&M contribution and the process of maintenance for the sustainability. He/she will be the ‘**Cluster Leader**’. So there will be 4/5 ‘Cluster leaders’ in a Para. The cluster leaders will elect/select a person among them to be their representative at the Para level. He/she will be ‘**Para Leader**’. In this way there will be 2/3 ‘Para leaders’ in a village. At the village level, the ‘Para leaders’ will select/elect a person amongst them as the village representative. He/she will be the ‘**Village Leader**’. **The ‘Village Leaders’ will be co-opted in the Union WATSAN Committee. The Gram Sarkars will ensure the gender balance at the village level in manner so that the number of women leaders at the village would be 1:3.**

23. It will be mandatory that all decisions at the Union WATSAN committee regarding a village be taken in the presence of the concerned Village Leader(s). They will be permanent invitees to all the meetings of Union WATSAN committees.

24. The Unit for Policy Implementation (UPI) of the Local Government Division will first pilot the provisions of Para 4 and 5 above in some Union Parishads/ Pourashavas/ City Corporations. After the pilot, lessons learnt will be documented and the process of providing ‘voice to the poor’ in decision-making will be implemented countrywide.

b. Sanitation:

25. The *Gram Sarkars* will perform the job of identifying households who do not have the Basic Minimum Service Level (BMSL), in following stages:

- i) Identify the number of households, which have private ‘hygienic latrines’. These will be excluded from the list of households who do not have the BMSL.

- ii) Identify the number of households, which do not have private ‘hygienic latrines’ and are dependant on either unhygienic latrines or open defecation. These will be included in the list of households who do not have the BMSL.
- iii) Identify the number of households, which do not have private ‘hygienic latrines’ and are dependant on ‘others’ latrines’. If the number of households who are using one common latrine are more than two, or the number of persons using a common latrine is more than 10, then those households do not have the BMSL.
- iv) Identify the number of households, which do not have private ‘hygienic latrines’ and are dependant on ‘community latrines’. If the average number of persons using one latrine (in a ‘community latrine’ of more than one latrines) is more than 10, then those persons do not have the BMSL.

26. **In a village, the households without BMSL will be defined as the ‘Eligible Group’. In the ‘Eligible Group’, the hardcore poor households will be defined as ‘Target Group’.**

27. **It is only the households of ‘Target Group’ that will be given subsidy for constructing their latrines.**

6. Mechanism of Administering Subsidies:

28. As per the existing policy of the government, the community, irrespective of whether the beneficiary household is Poor, Hardcore Poor or Non-Poor, is required to contribute 10 % of the Capital Costs of water supply projects as the ‘beneficiary’s share’ in the project. The Pro-poor strategy provides that, the capital cost contribution of the ‘Target-Group’ (of hardcore poor households, residing in clusters below the BMSL) would be 50 % of that earmarked for the non-hardcore poor as their beneficiary’s share.

29. Considering that depending on the technology choice of the community, the average share per household could turn out to be out of affordability limits of the hardcore poor, the share of hardcore poor households would have an upper ceiling of Taka 500.00.

30. There will be a **provision of collecting the capital cost contribution from hardcore poor in installments** within the scheme-cycle, for ensuring for minimizing the stress on the ‘Target Group’ in making their capital cost-contribution. The union WATSAN committee with the assistance of the *gram sarkar* will monitor and support the hardcore poor for their regular payment.

31. The ‘User Group’ at the cluster level, *Gram Sarkar* at the ward level and the WATSAN committee at the Union level must ensure the sustainability of the WATSAN assets through regular operation and maintenance (O&M).

32. In a cluster, the ‘User Group’ will pay 100 percent cost contribution for O&M. But the hardcore poor households (although they are part of User Group) will pay 50 percent of the O&M contribution earmarked for the non-poor households. They will also be allowed to pay their contribution by labor.

33. Considering that depending on the technology choice of the community, the average O & M Charge per household could turn out to be out of affordability limits of the

hardcore poor, the O & M Charge of hardcore poor households would have an upper ceiling of Taka 25.00 per month.

34. The cluster leader will collect the contribution and ensure regular O&M. the *Gram Sarkar* will monitor the activities.

7. Other Measures:

a. Micro-Credit Networking and wage employment:

35. Considering the financial crisis of the poorer section of the population, the micro credit programs should be extended in the un-served and under served areas. The NGOs have a wide network of micro finance throughout the country, which should be effectively channelised to meet the requirement of poor people for water and sanitation, within their project-areas.

36. The Poor persons should be given preference in wage employment works under implementation by different government agencies and Local Governments, so that they can, amongst other things, contribute their share in the provision of water and sanitation services.

b. Monitoring and Evaluation:

37. There must be regular monthly meeting of the Ward level WATSAN committees and written minutes of meetings must be submitted to the UP secretary regarding the current Water and sanitation situation in general and that of hardcore poor in specific.

c. Capacity Building of LGIs:

38. There should be a rigorous training programmes for both Union Parishads and Ward level WATSAN committees to increase their awareness about the importance of the safe water and sanitation in human development in general, and, about their duties in respect of this Pro-poor Strategy, in specific.

8. Conclusion:

39. It is expected that this Pro-poor strategy would be successful in reducing poverty of those hardcore poor families, which do not have access to safe drinking water and appropriate sanitation, by providing them this access within next five years, while giving them priority in allocation of resources and cost-sharing, and, involving them in planning, implementation and operation & maintenance.