

A case study- Ensuring accessibility to Persons with disabilities to sanitation services in a refugee camp-7

Provision of life-saving WASH services to the Rohingya refugee population in Ukhiya Upazila, Cox's Bazar District.

Project Intervention Area: Camp- 7

Implemented by: NGO Forum for Public Health

Supported by: UNICEF, Bangladesh



Executive Summary

The NGO Forum for Public Health has been implementing a project titled "Provision of life-saving WASH services to the Rohingya refugee population in Camp 6, Ukhiya, and Teknaf Upazilas, Cox's Bazar District," which aims to provide safe water supply, improved and inclusive sanitation, and inclusive hygiene promotion to the Rohingya refugee population. In order to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities in sanitation services, the project built 54 persons with disabilities-accessible latrines in Camp 7. The latrine was designed after extensive consultation with people with disabilities and their actual needs. After providing these latrines, they have been able to access latrine facilities easily and comfortably. As a result, their previous struggles to gain access to sanitation services came to an end.

This case study describes the process of constructing a person with disability-accessible latrine, including the lesson learnt and the way forward.

Background

Access to safe water and sanitation facilities is a fundamental right of all people, including persons with disabilities, the denial of which can have serious implications for their well-being. Persons with disabilities, especially in the Rohingya refugee camps at Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, are mostly deprived of any social services and face difficulties getting access to safe WaSH facilities. Social and physical isolation combined with the geographical location of the camp makes the situation worse. It makes it difficult to reach persons with disabilities while women and girls from respective families are mainly the ones affected by this situation.

A total of 919,929 Rohingya refugees were staying in the Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh, according to the UNHCR population fact sheet published on October 30, 2022.¹ Among them, 52% are women, 52% are children, and 4% are older people. The Age and Disability Inclusion Needs Assessment, May 2021 shows that 12% of the population are persons with disabilities. There are gaps regarding equitable access to safe and dignified sustainable sanitation facilities, especially for persons with disabilities and the elderly. Since the massive influx from Myanmar to Bangladesh in August 2017, with financial support from UNICEF, the NGO Forum for Public Health has been providing WASH services to the refugee population in camps 6 and 7 by constructing different WASH infrastructures. It helps to ensure the functionality of sanitation facilities and their access to the targeted population. NGOF with support from UNICEF helped address accessibility issues by either adapting or constructing accessible latrines as per deemed requirements.

NGOF conducted a needs assessment on accessibility to sanitation facilities. The needs assessment included consultation with persons with disabilities, women/adolescent girls, caregivers, and the Majis.

¹ UNHCR Population factsheet (as of 31 Oct 2022)

² Age and Disability Inclusion Needs Assessment, May 2021

Persons with disabilities who have to go to the communal latrines suffer a lot as the commodes are low or not as comfortable as they want, and no handles or stairs are available for support. The assessment shows that they are not capable of going to communal sanitation facilities without the assistance of their caregivers. So they need separate persons with disabilities accessible latrines. As per their requirements, NGO Forum constructed persons with disabilities accessible latrines, including needed accessories inside the latrine.

Strategy and implementation

Disability is one of the important issues in the UNICEF Strategy for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2016 – 2030.²² The key elements of disability inclusion and accessibility within the WASH strategic framework are as follows:

- The WASH Strategy's vision is the realization of human rights to water and sanitation for all, and the objectives aim to achieve both safe and affordable drinking water for all as well as sanitation and hygiene for all. The equity focus of using the term "for all" necessarily includes persons with disabilities.
- The strategy's primary guiding concept is to reduce inequality, with a focus on giving the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children—like those with disabilities—the help they need.
- One of the program's approaches is to deliver services and supplies to those most in need in order to reach the poorest and marginalized groups where no one else is able to do so, including results such as accessible WASH facilities for children with disabilities

In line with the UNICEF strategy, the NGO Forum for Public Health with support from UNICEF has been implementing the WASH project since the inception of the Rohingya Response program. Under this Project, NGO Forum has been working for the community with the aim of providing all refugees living in camps with adequate, appropriate, acceptable, and accessible sanitation facilities. Providing accessible sanitation facilities to persons with disabilities is one of the project's objectives.

NGOF considered the following issues to address the special needs of targeted refugees.

- identify and address the nature of each person's disability;
- consider socio-environmental condition;
- consider the acceptability of the household;
- ensure hygienic conditions and easy operation and maintenance to reduce the family's caregiver women's burden;
- To promote social accountability towards persons with disabilities
- To ensure persons with disabilities' representation;
- To train and engage community volunteers to minimize the cost of repair and maintenance.

NGOF constructed 54 accessible latrines in camp 7 in consultation with targeted people.

To ensure persons with disabilities in its WASH interventions, the project has built 54 persons with disabilities-accessible latrines in Camp 7.



Picture 1: Persons with disabilities friendly latrines

In Camp 7, all the persons with disabilities and vulnerable families are identified and listed through community consultation and assessments by Sanitation Supervisor and Community Hygiene Promoter. The assessment was conducted through one to one household interview. Then the lists are put forward to the respective section (Sanitation Engineer) of the project. Based on the requirements of the persons with disabilities, the design of the latrine and BOQ along with the list of all the necessary materials and equipments was sent to the procurement section of the project. Then the procurement section assigned vendors through bidding process. The vendors completed the construction work as per design and handed

over those to Sanitation section. And finally those facilities were handed over to the person with disabilities. The intervention was designed and brought necessary modifications for persons with disabilities-friendly water and sanitation technologies, taking the different types of impairment into account. The most convenient part of the household is considered the technology's installation point so that the family members can ensure their necessary support for easy access to the facility provided.

The adaptation or modifications of the latrines include: a commode chair, a small water reservoir tank with a water sprayer, fixed rope, etc., as well as other materials they need.

The NGO Forum conducted a satisfaction and feedback assessment of the community's people about the installation of person with disability-friendly latrines in the camp for persons with disabilities. From the feedback, it is found that the persons with disabilities-friendly latrine users are satisfied with this construction, as these latrines are easily accessible to them. The latrines are situated very close to their houses, so they don't have to go far.

"I'm very grateful to NGO Forum for providing such persons with disabilities friendly latrine at my own household. I hope NGO Forum will continue such kind of good work in future"- Anam Ullah (FCN No: 144951, Sub-Block: B-06)



Picture 2: Anam Ullah providing his feedback to CHP

Progress and results

There were only eight (08) persons with disabilities accessible latrines in camp 7 at the end of 2019. After the construction of fifty-four (54) latrines for persons with disabilities, the total number of persons with disabilities accessible latrine has been sixty two (62).

After providing persons with disabilities accessible latrines, the lives of persons with disabilities and their caregivers living in the camp, have been easier than before. The targeted people now can access sanitation facilities with the modification or construction of accessible latrines. These latrines have a positive impact on beneficiaries' lives, and raising their dignity.

Hasina Begum and her daughters' story tells more about the impact of the construction or modification of accessible latrines in camp 7.

The story of Hasina Begum and her two daughters with disabilities

Hasina Begum (FCN: 136789), a 49-year-old woman living at Block-E (E9) in Camp-7, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, fled Myanmar along with her family members during the oppression by the Myanmar Military Force and took shelter at Rohingya Camp in Bangladesh in August 2017. Her husband passed away back in Myanmar. He died of a heart attack about 16 years ago. She is living with four children: a son and three daughters, among whom two daughters have multiple forms of disabilities.

Shatara Bibi, her elder daughter, is a 23-year-old young woman with multiple forms of disabilities since birth. She has a problem with mobility, communication, and speech. She needs support for her daily activities. Mother assists in her daily life activities.

Mirijan Bibi, a 15 year's old adolescent girl with issues in mobility and communication since she got typhoid at the age of Nine. Due to the wrong medication, she got partially paralyzed. She also fully depends on her mother for her daily activities.

Mohammed Kasem, her only son, is a 21-year-old unemployed man. Sometimes he works if he gets any scope to work.



Picture 2: Hasina Begum with her two daughters with disabilities

At the beginning of 2017, there was no water source close to her shelter. She used to collect drinking and cooking water from a shallow tube well and other open water sources which were far away from her house.

Because of unsafe water, they often got water-borne diseases, causing a financial burden. Later, Hasina begum started collecting water from a deep tube well far from her shelter, which caused physical stress to her and was time-consuming as well. Similarly, there was no latrine close to her or a separate latrine at her shelter. There were communal latrines and Hasina (family) had to share along with her children. She had to carry her two daughters on her lap and assist them all the time. She didn't feel comfortable and was also embarrassed as there were many people queuing for the facility.

This caused a couple of concerns like privacy, safety, and security. They had issues accessing latrines at night as there was no light on the way. This led them to defecate or urinate at home during the night or even at other times of the day. Likewise, the lack of bathing space had been another challenge for her family.

Hasina Begum had health issues like high blood pressure. Assisting her two daughters and other household work always stressed her and often remains depressed.

NGO Forum with the support of UNICEF started its intervention after an assessment. NGO Forum built an accessible latrine inside her house in 2021. As a result, Hasina's family has been able to use sanitation facilities safely and with high dignity.



Picture 3: Persons with disabilities friendly latrine inside Hasina Begum's house

"I had to carry my elder daughter to the latrine on my lap and the other daughter by supporting her hands. It was so embarrassing for us. I, as well as my daughters, felt ashamed of going to the latrine. Now we feel very happy. We can maintain our privacy. It's a blessing for us from God. I would like to thank a lot to UNICEF/NGO Forum for providing this latrine within our shelter." Hasina Begum.

Besides accessible sanitation facilities, UNICEF/NGOF also supported Hasina's daughters in menstrual hygiene management (MHM). Hasina has been assisting her daughters during their menstrual periods. NGO

Forum conducted several awareness sessions on hygiene promotion and menstrual hygiene management (MHM). The community hygiene promotion volunteers regularly visit households to raise awareness of hygiene issues.

In addition to the sessions, MHM kits were distributed to these targeted households including persons with disabilities, on a regular basis. After getting hygiene messages and distribution items, they have been more aware of menstrual hygiene management and have been able to maintain good hygiene practices in their household.

Hasina Begum said: *“community hygiene volunteers regularly visit my house and talk about MHM and hand washing. They say this for our good health. We have been able to learn many things.”*



Picture 4: CHP along with CHV providing awareness session to Hasina Begum's house

Initially, Hasina had to spend more time in assisting her daughters and collecting water from a distance. She got very limited time for household work, however, she had to do all household work as well. But this intervention helped her reduce her huge workload, particularly in assisting her daughters to use latrines.

Lessons learned and way forward

Accessible latrine construction in the Rohingya camp is one of the good initiatives taken by the project. The major lesson learned from the project is individual participation is important for change. Hygiene promotion and awareness-raising activities are of great importance. Learning by seeing is effective in a community setting. The project adopted a disability-inclusion approach while providing WASH services in the camp. Caregivers' involvement in designing or modifying sanitation infrastructure is worthy. Likewise, community volunteers' involvement is another important initiative that the project has adopted. Community volunteers' regular household visits are crucial for awareness raising. Regular hygiene promotion activities ensure that the targeted population is aware and practicing properly.

Most of the latrines are either inside the shelter or nearby, thus regular cleaning is important to avoid foul smells. Hygiene promotion activities triggered household members on the operation and maintenance of latrines.

Besides the operation and maintenance of latrines, focusing on community feedback and response mechanism must be prioritized.

References:

- UNHCR Population factsheet (as of 31 Oct 2022)
- Age and Disability Inclusion Needs Assessment, May 2021.
- UNICEF strategy for water, sanitation and hygiene 2016-2030
- Joint Multi-Sector Need Assessment (J-MSNA), July - August 2020
- 2021 JOINT RESPONSE PLAN

Photo credits:

Photo credit goes to Md. Aminul Islam, Rabby, Feedback Mechanism Officer, who captured the some significant pictures of persons with disabilities along with latrine for the case study.

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About the Authors: This case study is based on the outcome of the UNICEF-funded project in its area of responsibility in Cox's Bazar. This study is more about NGO Forum's intervention in Rohingya refugee camp number 7.

