



Freshwater Action Network  
South Asia




Freshwater Action Network  
South Asia-Bangladesh

# Counting on the Community



SKS



First Published September 2024  
© SKS Foundation

All rights reserved. No part of this Publication may be reproduced or translated in any form or by any means without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Designing : Roknuzzaman

Published by : SKS Foundation

Printed by : *SKS Printers*

# Counting on the Community

*Editorial Advisor*

Rasel Ahmed Liton

*Writing & Editing*

Joseph Halder

Xavier Sku

Prodip Roy

**SKS Foundation**

# Table of CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	03
Sultana Makes Her Community Mobilized	04
Committing Time to the Community	06
Armina Akther- A Sanitation Promoter	08
CWIS Faces Climatic Challenges	10
Mindset Matters in Waste Management	12
Young Power in CWIS Promotion	14
<i>Nari</i> Forum Prompt Sanitation Demand	16
Captive Community Cry for Human Dignity	19
Media Influencing CWIS Promotion	21
Teacher Teaching the Community	23
Monitoring Leads <i>Harijon</i> Community's Voice Heard	26
<i>Hat Bharatkhali</i> Freed from Health Hazards	28
<i>Harijon</i> Families Find A Future	30
<i>Nari</i> Forum Breaks the Barrier	32
Community Demand Turns the Toilet Inclusive	34



# Foreword

SKS Foundation, the FANSA- Bangladesh Secretariat, has been implementing the project *Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Networks in South Asia to Achieve SDG 6 (Rising for the Rights Project)* alongside other members of the network. The Project focuses on community engagement for the promotion of Safely Managed Sanitation Services (SMSS) following the City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) approach. The Project covers the cities/towns under 3 geophysical locations namely Barishal City Corporation, Barishal; Sreemangal Municipality, Moulvibazar; and Gaibandha Municipality & Muktinagar Union, Gaibandha.

The *Rising for the Rights Project* has made some visible progress in 2 years toward community engagement for CWIS promotion. The respective community people are mobilized and community engagement is strengthened through their participation in various forms to amplify voices to establish people's sanitation rights inclusively. Respective service providers & duty-bearers are sensitized and responding accountably for providing inclusive, accessible & safely managed sanitation services leaving no one behind.

The booklet *Counting on the Community* is the testimony of community engagement for CWIS promotion while 15 cases reflect some good examples of success & challenges. The cases cover mobilization & capacity issues of women & youth groups, local allies and CSOs to trigger voices of the marginalized community for their WASH rights. FANSA-Bangladesh's advocacy spirit also reflected in turning the duty-bearers accountable for CWIS promotion despite some climatic challenges in geophysical realities.

I thank FANSA-Bangladesh members AVAS, MAC Bangladesh & WDP alongside SKS Foundation for engaging the community meaningfully toward CWIS promotion. Thanks to my colleagues who conducted the cases to make this publication happen. I hope the *Booklet* will prove resourceful to its readers.

**Rasel Ahmed Liton**

Chief Executive  
SKS Foundation

## Sultana Makes Her Community Mobilized

“In consultation with the people, I try to help the community identify the problems in my locality,” says Mst. Sultana Begum, a resident of Kalibaripara of Gaibandha Pourashava. In 2021, she was selected as a member of the Town-level Coordination Committee (TLCC) by the Pourashava in Ward-7. Since then, Ms. Sultana gradually became a popular community leader for her proactive role. “Because of my engagement in social work at one stage, my house used to be crowded as if I was a people’s representative,” adds Ms. Sultana. Her dynamic role-playing as a TLCC member came to the forefront when Ms. Sultana got engaged in promoting City-wide Inclusive Sanitation as a woman leader being mobilized under the *Rising for Rights Project* of FANSA-Bangladesh implemented by SKS Foundation in Gaibandha Pourashava.



In everyday life, the residents of the municipality area face multi-faceted problems concerning unsafe sanitation systems and environmental issues. As a TLCC member, Ms. Sultana raises her voice in favor of her community people under Ward-7 at TLCC meetings to resolve the identified problems relating to WASH with a focus on safely managed sanitation along with other issues such as people’s protection, livelihood, child rights and so on.

Ms. Sultana was motivated by the ‘*Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Network in South Asia to Achieve SDG 6*’ project in 2023 to stand beside her community. “I received skills from the training in dealing with problems to the community people,” she reveals. For enhancing leadership

and professionalism of women in the WASH sector at the grassroots to uplift their ability to raise voices for WASH rights and services training titled *'Strengthening the capacity of CBOs/CSOs with an increased ability to raise their unified voices through collective actions for SMSS as guided by City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) plan'* were organized for Community Leaders. Ms. Sultana enhanced her leadership by participating in such training. She also took part in WASH sector Monitoring Training, Social/Public Audit Training, and so on.

Ms. Sultana was also selected as a member of the Community-led Participatory Monitoring Team by her community. Hence, she proactively organizes and participates in monitoring visits in her locality, visits different locations, and takes part in addressing the problems in the Pourashava. She regularly participates in various meetings and events, especially on City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) and WASH rights at Pourashava. Alongside, Ms. Sultana engaged herself in various social activities in the community. She disseminates important messages in awareness sessions especially on WASH, sanitation, menstrual hygiene management (MHM), environmental issues, safeguarding, early marriage, social inclusion, etc at the community level.



Raising her voice taking her community together, Mst. Sultana Begum managed to help install 4 sanitary latrines by the Pourashava in her locality. With the support of other development agencies, she also helped the marginalized people to get livelihood support for 150 households (each family got the in-kind support amount of BDT 10,900, road maintenance (50 meters), and constructed drain (nearly 30 meters). Ms. Sultana is also continuing her support to minimize family conflicts, reduce violence against women, and legal aid support to the victims. Ms. Sultana now gets engaged with other organizations who work in the promotion of WASH services with a focus on inclusive sanitation.

## Committing Time to the Community

“I work for the welfare of the society. So, I am ready to deploy my time for my community as and when necessary,” says Mst. Mukul Begum who resides in Ward- 5 of Barishal City Corporation, Barishal. She has gained the spirit of working for safely managed sanitation services (SMSS) by participating in the Women Forum meeting. Mst. Mukul Begum is a Women Forum member, formed under the FANSA-Bangladesh-run *Rising for Rights Project* in the Barishal City Corporation area.

The Women Forum was formed in February 2024 by the FANSA-Bangladesh member AVAS so that women should know and be able to discuss their problems or, issues such as the disadvantages of unsafe water, unsafe sanitation, unplanned waste dumping, child safety and security, child labor, drugs, etc in a platform. However, the Women Forum discusses and deals with the duty bearers about the promotion of safely managed sanitation in households and the promotion of City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) by the City Corporation Authority.



Since the time of her engagement with the Women Forum, Ms. Mukul has been raising her voice to the duty-bearers and City Corporation demanding WASH facilities for the residents of her Polashpur Gutchogram slum. She feels the need to amplify voices for WASH rights. She contemplates, “City Corporation will not recognize me alone. For this reason, we discuss the sanitation situation in the Women Forum together and place the problems to the City Corporation Authority for resolving those.”

Ms. Mukul feels that concerning the coastal context, they become easy victims of natural disasters such as cyclones, tidal surges, excessive rains, etc as they are dwellers of the coastal belt. During cyclones, water and sanitation facilities get severely affected. The toilets get damaged. Mukul says, “We are demanding for such sanitation facilities that are inclusive and sustainable in the coastal belt.” However, “It’s not an easy task to sensitize the concerned authorities to get things done



for the slum dwellers. We are knocking on the City Corporation Authority repeatedly to make them that our voice is heard, though they rarely notice our voices. We need and are making a close collaboration with the City Corporation to fulfill the WASH demands of our colony,” Ms. Mukul reiterates her confidence.



Ms. Mukul also participated in the dialogue between the community and duty-bearers organized by AVAS. The participants of the dialogue (public hearing) raised the city's demands for waste bins at different public points, public toilets, pipe water supply, relief from water-logging, killing mosquitoes, etc. Ms. Mukul explained the dire sanitation situation of the city and her colony that during rainfalls the colony got inundated. The solid wastes and human wastes overflow with rain-water harmful to public health. Ms. Shimu Akter, another member of the Women Forum expressed the situation, “Streets overflow just for a little rain. For this reason, our demand is for safe water, safe sanitation and clean drains & sewerages.” The duty-bearers who were present expressed their commitment to fulfilling their demands.

## Armina Akther- A Sanitation Promoter

Sreemangal Railway Station, a bustling hub in northeastern Bangladesh, long faced a glaring issue- the absence of Public Toilets. This posed a particular challenge for women, who endured the discomfort of waiting for trains with no sanitation facilities. Despite growing public outcry, the municipality's construction of a new Public Toilet Complex was delayed in opening due to disagreements between the Railway Authority and local officials over jurisdiction. For 6 months, the Toilet remained locked, forcing people to defecate in the open, leading to severe health risks and environmental pollution.

But the story took a different turn when Ms. Armina Akther, a local community leader mobilized & trained by MAC Bangladesh, a FANSA-Bangladesh member engaged in implementing the *Rising for Rights Project*, stepped forward. Deeply concerned about the passengers' health and dignity, Ms. Armina spearheaded a movement to address the sanitation crisis. "I couldn't stand by and watch people suffer," she recalls. "Health is a basic right, and proper sanitation is a key part of that," Ms. Armina adds.

Ms. Armina's first step was to approach the municipality and railway authority, advocating for the immediate opening of the Toilets. "Passengers and the public were suffering greatly. We needed to prioritize their well-being over jurisdictional disagreements and open the Toilet for the sake of public health," she emphasized during discussions with officials, pushing for urgent action.

Another challenge arose from the leaseholder, Mr. Elias Molla, who was assigned to manage the facility. Mr. Elias Molla was hesitant to open the Toilet due to concerns over potential financial losses. However, Ms. Armina's negotiation skills proved invaluable. "I understood his concerns, but I also knew the stakes were higher- this was about public health and dignity," she explains. Through persistence and thoughtful discussion, she convinced Mr. Elias to take responsibility and open the facilities.



Once the Toilet became operational, a new challenge emerged. Many, resistant to paying for sanitation services, continued to urinate and defecate outside. Recognizing the need to shift public attitudes, Ms. Armina launched a community-driven awareness campaign. She gathered people, explaining the long-term health benefits of using proper sanitation facilities. “It wasn’t just about the immediate relief. It was about changing mindsets for a cleaner, healthier future,” she explained. Her campaign focused on hygiene education and community well-being, making it clear that improved sanitation would benefit everyone.



Gradually, Ms. Armina’s efforts paid off. “At first, people hesitated, but as they saw the cleanliness and convenience, they came around,” Ms. Armina recalls. More and more people began using the Public Toilet Complex, significantly reducing health risks and improving the railway’s overall cleanliness. Her leadership has had a profound impact on the people of Sreemangal. Today, the Public Toilet Complex is well-used, and the railway’s hygiene has visibly improved. “The change has been remarkable. We have healthier families and a cleaner environment. That’s what we fought for,” Ms. Armina says with pride.

In recognition of her success, Ms. Armina was invited to share her role-playing at the Annual Workshop of FANSA organized in Sri Lanka in January 2024 where she inspired intercountry partners & stakeholders. Her journey exemplifies how grassroots leadership and community collaboration can bring about transformative change. “I hope that other communities facing similar challenges will see our action and know that change is possible if we stand together,” Ms. Armina reflects on her successful role-playing.



## CWIS Faces Climatic Challenges

The coastal belt of Bangladesh is disaster-prone due to its geophysical context and climatic hazards. Barishal City Corporation is located in the coastal belt. Climate-induced natural disasters like severe cyclones, shocking tidal surges, sea level rise, overwhelming salinity intrusion, river erosion, excessive rainfall, severe waterlogging, etc occur more frequently in Barishal areas. Consequently, the general operation, maintenance and in turn the sustainability of WASH facilities becomes vulnerable.



Ms. Moli Begum, President of the Nari Forum (Women Forum) formed & mobilized by AVAS under the *Rising for Rights Project*, has been living in the Stadium Colony (a slum in the City Corporation) for 20 years. She came with her parents to this slum from Bakerganj Upazila as they lost all their land to river erosion. Ms. Moli explains the miserable living conditions in the slum, “The dwellers of the slum are living in a congested environment. There are no safe sanitation facilities for the slum dwellers. The residents are using makeshift toilets, connected to sewerage and drains. As a result, fecal sludge and solid wastes float on the street and ground during rainfall.” “All over the slums become water-logged and unhygienic. Our children become easy prey to waterborne diseases. Women and girls suffer as they are engaged in household chores related to water use,” Ms. Moli Begum adds.



Ms. Rahima Sultana Kazal, Executive Director of AVAS, a FANSA-BD member engaged in the implementation of the *Rising for Rights Project* in the Barishal City Corporation, says, “Prominent human activities like grabbing canals and ponds in the name of so-called development are creating water-logging in the city.” She adds, “Once, there were many canals and ponds in Barishal City Corporation areas. Because of





the unplanned grab of those water bodies, natural water flow is now impeded. This has been a huge challenge for maintaining safe sanitation and health & hygiene habits.”



The city dwellers face hazards, even in little rainfalls. Sewerage and drains are filled with rainwater. The sufferings multiply when there are heavy rainfalls and cyclones take place. Cyclones are associated with storm surges, water-logging, floods, and salinity intrusions. Engr. Anwar Hossain, Assistant Engineer of Barishal City Corporation states, “Total sanitation is hampered because of natural calamity in Barishal City. Thus, improved & sustainable sanitation has become difficult in the City Corporation areas. Alongside, challenges relating to sweet water are increasing as the groundwater level has been decreasing, water sources have been damaged, cyclones have destroyed latrines, etc.”

Engr. Omer Faruque, Executive Engineer of Barishal City Corporation reveals, “City Corporation has its mandate to promote safely managed sanitation services following the City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) approach. We appreciate the FANSA-Bangladesh collaboration in CWIS promotion. The City Corporation is also trying a lot. However, limited resources are the key concern in CWIS promotion targeting the increasing population in the city areas and combating all the environmental hazards & climatic challenges. Low-income and floating people who are climate victims, increasing in the city becoming the victims of excessive river erosion, cyclones & salinity threats and taking shelter in the city abruptly.”



“When the Public Toilets were constructed covering a smaller population in the city, inclusivity and climate adaptation were not considered. Now, the situation demands to promote City-wide Inclusive Sanitation to adapt to the climatic threats and ensure that no one is left to access the improved sanitation facilities in the City Corporation Areas,” Engr. Omer Faruque upholds his realization.

## Mindset Matters in Waste Management

Like many towns in Bangladesh, Sreemangal, famous for its tea gardens and natural beauty, faces a growing challenge—improper waste management. Key public areas, including the Upazila Health Complex, the Railway Station, and *Harijon Polli*, are plagued by accumulating waste, posing health risks and diminishing the town's charm for residents and tourists alike.



Determined to restore their town's charm, a 7-member Community-Led Monitoring Team, comprising local allies, a municipality councilor, a teacher, a journalist, & FANSA-BD member, took action under the *Rising for Rights Project* of FANSA-Bangladesh. To improve sanitation, the Monitoring Team held meetings with local authorities, including municipal officials and the *Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)*. Together, they resolved to launch a community-driven cleanliness campaign targeting the most affected areas.

Resource limitation was a major challenge. Undeterred by the challenge, the Community-led Monitoring Team called on local duty-bearers & stakeholders for support. Sreemangal Municipality responded with cleaning trucks and sanitation workers, while the Tea Garden Authority shared their laborers, volunteers joined, Upazila Administration provided meals, and MAC Bangladesh, a local FANSA-BD member, engaged in implementing the Rising for Rights Project, coordinated the efforts in a community-led manner. Starting in October 2023- National Sanitation Month, the campaign continued at different intervals until May 2024 as a special drive.

Advocacy and Community-led Monitoring culminated in a comprehensive cleanliness drive held on 13-14 May 2024, which saw the joint participation of Government Officials, Sreemangal Municipality, CSOs, BNCC & Scouts and community representatives under the leadership of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). The drive successfully cleared solid waste that had accumulated for years at the Public Toilets, Upazila Health Complex and Sreemangal Railway Station. The results were transformative. Volunteers cleared piles of trash from the health complex, creating a cleaner, safer environment for patients and staff. The

railway station once again became welcoming for travelers, and residents of *Harijon Polli* worked side by side with the team to improve their neighborhood's sanitation. Spirits soared as the town celebrated its renewed cleanliness.

Yet, the success came with challenges. Within 3 months, litter began to return to the cleaned areas & sites. "We have made great strides, but lasting change will only come if we address the root cause—people's habits," observed Ms. Sharmin Jahan, the Female Councilor of Wards 1, 2 & 3, and a member of the Community-led Monitoring Team. Realizing that cleaning alone wouldn't suffice, the Monitoring Team pivoted their efforts toward awareness and accountability. They organized regular community meetings, emphasizing the importance of cleanliness and shared responsibility. "This is our town; if we don't care for it, who will?" urged Mr. Paritosh Dev, a dedicated Monitoring Team member, rallying the residents to take ownership of their town's future.

Despite the setbacks, the impact of their work was undeniable. Public spaces were visibly cleaner, and a sense of pride began to spread among the town's residents. "I've never seen the town look this clean. It's inspiring to see everyone working together," remarked Mr. Md. Hanif, a local business owner near the Upazila Health Complex. However, the Monitoring Team upheld that keeping Sreemangal town clean would require more than just occasional cleaning drives. Long-term behavioral changes were needed— not just from the citizens, but also from the local authorities.

Far from disheartened, the Community-led Monitoring Team remains committed to its mission. Their next steps include ongoing awareness campaigns and initiatives designed to instill a sense of shared responsibility among all.



## Young Power in CWIS Promotion

Youths are dynamic. They can significantly contribute to community mobilization and can bring energy, enthusiasm, and a fresh perspective to community mobilization efforts. They can effectively advocate for social issues, including health and hygiene, by organizing campaigns, events, and initiatives that resonate with their peers and the broader community. Considering all potentiality, youth have been engaged in community mobilization for City-wide Inclusive Sanitation under the *Rising for Rights Project* of FANSA-Bangladesh.

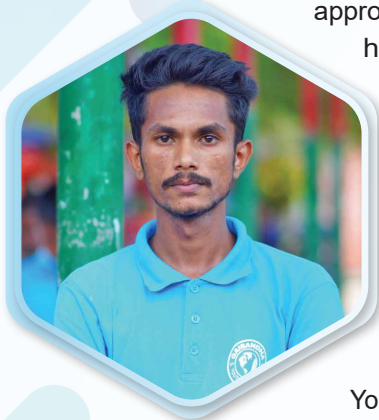
Mr. Md. Abu Kalam, 29, a member of the Barishal Youth Forum in Barishal City Corporation, upholds his stand, “We are in active collaboration with AVAS concerning the *Rising for Rights Project* intervention. We have been engaged in social mobilization. We have been making the community people aware about managing wastes safely.” The 30-member Barishal Youth Forum is sensitizing the slum dwellers and other families in general not to throw wastes here and there, and not to connect septic tanks to drains and sewerage.



Mr. Abu Kalam states his action, “Community people who do not hear our advice, we make them connected with local government representatives. We raise the problems directly to the concerned Councilor of the City Corporation. If required, we even visit the Councilor’s residence to share the concerns and raise demands for safe WASH facilities.” Advocating to City Corporation and other development organizations the youth group has managed to connect pipeline water supply and 2 toilets in the slums of Barishal City Corporation.

Bangladesh Youth Organization in the Gaibandha district is also well-engaged by the SKS Foundation under the *Rising for Rights Project* intervention. Mr. Zihad Akanda, 20, Director of the Bangladesh Youth Organization, reflects, “We engage ourselves in safe sanitation promotion following the City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS)





approach. All of our 105 members are active in motivating the city dwellers to manage waste at household levels and maintain hygienic & inclusive sanitation facilities.” “On World Environment Day we managed waste bins at Gaibandha Bus Terminal to help protect against environmental pollution, and ensure a clean environment,” Mr. Zihad Akanda adds.

Mr. Zihad augments, “We youths also take part in sector monitoring as well as in social audits. We share findings with the Municipality Authority, and raise demands to other duty-bearers for inclusive sanitation on behalf of the marginalized and LNOB groups.”

Puspita Sarker, 22, a member of the Bangladesh Youth Organization of Gaibandha says, “Youths are now counted as we raise WASH-related issues repeatedly to the duty-bearers on the community’s behalf.”



The youth groups are also raising demands to respective LGIs to improve the sewerage and drainage systems. Young people often have a strong influence on their peers as

well as their community both in Barishal and Gaibandha.

By engaging them, and advocating for promoting CWIS, this young power is inspiring others to adopt similar practices in the field of safely managed sanitation.



## Nari Forum Prompt Sanitation Demand

“Women are part and parcel of the family, of the community, of the society, and of the nation. They are inseparable from all these social bonds. Yet, naturally all over the country both in rural and urban settings, it is found that women are the most sufferers because of the absence of adequate and appropriate WASH facilities for the women at home, in the community as well as in public places. Women’s participation is always neglected in the decision-making process e.g. installation of any WASH facilities. Their special needs and demands are rarely considered in the society.” The participating women upheld these views at the launching ceremony of the Women Forum in Gaibandha Municipality. The *Nari Forum* (Women Forum) of Gaibandha Municipality was formed on 15 February 2024 mobilizing 30 women by SKS Foundation, a member organization, and Secretariat of FANSA-Bangladesh.

“In urban areas, municipalities, and city corporations construct public toilets in different public places. However, issues of women are not considered. As a result, women are deprived of using public toilets for unhygienic conditions and safety issues, especially due to the absence of a women-friendly environment.” The Gaibandha *Nari Forum* members further expressed while discussing the sanitation situation of the city among themselves. Thus, to enhance women’s leadership and professionalism in WASH promotion, *Nari Forums* have been formed. *Nari Forum* has been formed in 3 working districts under the FANSA-Bangladesh-run project “*Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Network to Achieve SDG 6*” (*Rising for Rights Project*) of FANSA-Bangladesh.



The *Nari Forum* of Saghata Upazila comprised of 30 members was formed on 7 March 2024 by Women Development Program (WDP), another FANSA-Bangladesh member engaged in the implementation of the *Rising for Rights Project* in Muktinagar union under Saghata upazila, Gaibandha.

Participating in different discussion sessions, trainings, dialogues, etc under the *Rising for Rights Project*, the *Nari Forum* members are now aware, mobilized concerning the safe WASH issues, and equipped with concepts on safely managed sanitation services (SMSS) and City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS). Advocating the municipal/city authority and other duty bearers, the *Nari Forums* are playing a pivotal role on behalf of marginalized women and especially the LNOB groups.



Being mobilized and capacitated, the *Nari Forum* members in Gaibandha and Saghata are playing an important role in promoting Safely Managed Sanitation Services (SMSS) following the City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) approach in their respective localities. The Forum members are raising their voices and placing their community demand collectively to the duty bearers for claiming WASH rights. Ms. Syeeda Parvin, Vice-president of Gaibandha *Nari Forum* informs, “As we mobilized the community people and submitted the petition to Gaibandha Municipality demanding increased budget allocation in WASH, the Mayor promised to increase the budget with special focus on city sanitation.”



Ms. Sada Rani, a member of Gaibandha *Nari Forum* affirms, “*Nari Forum* members have been playing key roles in making the duty-bearers accountable and responsible for providing services to citizens in an effective way. We also take part in monitoring the sanitation situation, and, in turn, share the duty-bearers about the findings. We raise our voices for necessary steps on the community’s behalf.”

Ms. Anju Begum, a member of Gaibandha *Nari Forum* reveals, “We have taken part in monitoring the WASH situation covering all 9 Wards of Gaibandha Municipality. The findings of this rigorous process have helped the Municipality know about the real sanitation situation of the city. In the Sharing Meeting on



Monitoring findings, we found positive responses of the duty-bearers.” Ms. Masuda Akter, Secretary of Gaibandha *Nari* Forum says, “We have also raised our demand in the Open Budget Ceremony of Gaibandha Municipality for increasing budget in WASH.”

*Nari* Forum members sit together quarterly to review progress against their action plans and revise the next plans accordingly. Their plans include raising voices to the duty bearers for WASH rights, dialogue for increasing WASH budgets, monitoring of sanitation system of Pourashava, carrying out public/ social audits, etc. The *Nari* Forums of Saghata and Gaibandha have taken the tasks of monitoring the sanitation systems in Gaibandha Municipality, and Muktinagar Union of Saghata upazila focusing on the current state of public and community toilets. The Forum also identified households with toilets connected to the drainage system.



Ms. Mousumi Begum, President of Saghata *Nari* Forum expresses, “We have raised the demand with submission of a petition to the Union Parishad for allocating increased budget. As a result, the Parishad increased the budget for WASH 3 times high.” Ms. Lovely Begum, Vice-president of Saghata *Nari* Forum states, “As we raised the demand, the Upazila Administration allocated a separate toilet for women. The women and girls who come to Upazila to receive various services can now use this toilet comfortably.”

Both the *Nari* Forums are mobilizing and leading the citizens from different categories and corners of the respective city/town towards demanding safely managed sanitation services.



## Captive Community Cry for Human Dignity



In the lush green landscapes of Sreemangal Municipality, a small yet diverse community of tea garden workers, including Hindu, Muslim and Christian families, faces a daily struggle for survival. Some 30 families, living under the jurisdiction of the Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI), part of the Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB), and Sreemangal Municipality, are united by their shared livelihood but burdened by severe water and sanitation challenges.

The situation is dire. Despite the presence of 1 Deep Tube-well and 6 Shallow Tube-wells, the shallow ones often run dry during the dry

season. The dry seasonal hardship leaves the Deep Tube-well as the community's only reliable source of water- a resource far too poor for the population it serves. "When the dry season comes, we start fighting for every drop of water," laments Mr. Manik Mia, a resident of the community. Tensions run high as families compete for access to the precious resource, fueling conflicts that disrupt the peace of the community.

Sanitation conditions are equally disheartening. Only 10 out of the 30 families have basic toilets, forcing the majority to resort to open defecation. "I feel helpless when my children have to use open areas for defecation. It's humiliating and dangerous," says Ms. Ranjita Bakti, a resident and mother of two. The problem is exacerbated by the proximity of these defecation areas to their houses and water collection points, leading to widespread contamination.





Caught in a bureaucratic quagmire, the community has been neglected by both the Sreemangal Municipality and the BTRI Authority. The Municipality insists that the responsibility for providing basic services lies with the BTRI, as the workers are under the Tea Board's employment. On the other hand, the BTRI claims its duties are limited to paying wages, leaving the provision of essential services in limbo. As a result, these families remain neglected, and their basic human rights are ignored. Ms. Lima Mrong, a student at the graduate level and a frustrated resident, voices the collective despair: "When we are not recognized, who will listen to us? We are being deprived of our rights and even existence."

The lack of water and sanitation not only affects the community's health but also tears at its social fabric. Conflicts over water and the shame of open defecation have sown divisions among families. Women and children bear the brunt of this neglect, their dignity eroded by the absence of hygiene and privacy.

Recently, efforts to address this captive community's challenges have gained momentum through the *Rising for Rights Project*, led by FANSA-Bangladesh member MAC Bangladesh. The project has been instrumental in empowering the community to raise their voices and be heard. A series of events were organized with active participation from the community members, equipping them with the tools to advocate for their rights. On 22 August 2024, an orientation on Social Audit was held, enabling the community to evaluate their WASH conditions with a focus especially on improved sanitation. Following this, on 3 September 2024, a dialogue with the duty bearers was held in their community. Based on their newly acquired knowledge, they raised their concerns directly in front of the Municipality Authority demanding their rights regarding the citizen charter. Finally, on 7 September 2024, a Social Audit Team conducted a field visit to assess and verify the situation firsthand.

However, immediate action is still needed. "Both the local authorities and BTRI must recognize their accountability and collaborate to provide us with the safe water and sanitation facilities that we deserve. Access to clean water and proper sanitation is not a privilege, it's our basic human right," says Mr. Sujon Dalbot. Failure to address these issues perpetuates a cycle of deprivation, leaving this community trapped in an endless struggle for dignity and survival. "Without recognition and intervention of safe WASH facilities, we will continue to suffer in silence surrounded by the deep greenery of the attractive tea garden," Ms. Shiuly Begum concludes.

# Media Influencing CWIS Promotion

Mass media is playing a crucial role in sensitizing and mobilizing policy-makers, authorities, and stakeholders while empowering communities to claim their WASH rights. However, the pressing priorities of the mass media often overshadow critical WASH topics. Despite this, dedicated journalists are championing inclusive WASH rights and City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) in particular, ensuring these vital issues receive the attention they deserve.



Mr. Md. Saidur Rahman, a correspondent for *The Daily Messenger* and *Channel i* in Barishal, has been at the forefront of WASH advocacy through his impactful reporting. His coverage of different events organized under the *Rising for Rights Project* brought vital insights and challenges of the WASH advocacy initiative to a wider audience. A recipient of the *Shikhon Award*, Mr. Saidur strongly believes in the power of journalism to bridge the gap between policy-makers and communities. “Through my news, I share crucial information to ensure that the voices of the affected & demanding people are heard,” Mr. Saidur asserts.

Mr. Saidur highlights the significant climatic challenges faced by Barishal, a coastal city. “Cyclones, tidal surges, and flooding wreak havoc on sanitation facilities. If it rains for just half an hour, the streets are flooded, creating dire conditions, especially for slum dwellers,” he explains. “Although the Barishal City Corporation claims to have achieved 100% sanitation coverage, the reality is different, with solid and human waste often visible on the city streets,” Mr. Saidur shares.

In Gaibandha, the flood & char zone under the *Rising for Rights Project* intervention, journalist Mr. Rawshan Habib, Gaibandha Correspondent, *The Daily Manab Zamin* has been quite active with the CWIS promotion in the city. Mr. Rawshan Habib is actively covering the impact of the halt in waste collection in the city. His report titled “Barjo Aposharon Bandho- Swastho Jhunkite Gaibandhabasee” (Halt in Waste Dumping: People of Gaibandha in Health Risks) was published



on 16 September 2024. The disruption began on 5 August 2024 centering the political issues, when residents living near the dumping station blocked waste disposal leading to a significant crisis. Unattended waste clogged drainage systems, contaminated water sources, and created unhygienic conditions that severely affected sanitation across the town. “As a matter of public importance, I covered this issue with care and successfully drew the attention of both the public and the duty-bearers” Mr. Rawshan shares. A series of news coverage prompted the Gaibandha Municipal Authority to start addressing the growing concerns.

In Sreemangal, another Municipality, in the haor & tea garden zone, under the *Rising for Rights Project*, local journalists are mobilized to visit the public places focusing on the vulnerable sites in the city regularly. They have already visited the striking sites in the city including the Upazila Health Complex, Central Dumping Station, *Harijon Polli*, Railway Station, some Public Toilets, etc, and published news covering both the cleanliness and the challenging issues. On 22 September 2024, the journalists watched the troubling situation of the open waste dumping just in front of the residences and educational institutions. “We published news with care focusing on the vulnerable situation centering the open dumping”, says Mr. Umed Ali, staff correspondent for *NTV*. Alongside, the media men found a leak in the supply water pipe. “The supply water pipe runs alongside the drainage, and the leakage poses a serious health risk.” Mr. Bikul Chakraborty, Staff Reporter, *Dainik Bhorer Kagoj*, & District Correspondent *Ekushey TV & bdnews 24.com* states. Mr. Bikul emphasized the urgency to address this critical issue, especially given Sreemangal's status as a tourist town, and pledged to raise awareness through his reporting.

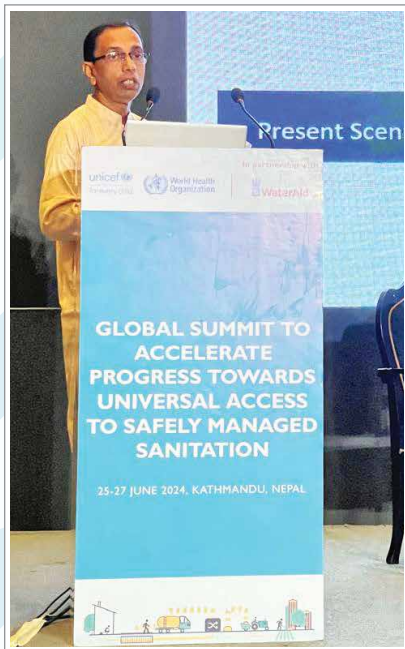


Alongside community mobilization & their engagement in favor of safely managed sanitation services in the city, the dedication of media people is also playing a vital role in influencing CWIS promotion and advocating for the rights of the citizens to safe, inclusive sanitation solutions. Their work informs the public as well as holds the authorities accountable, ensuring that sanitation issues remain at the forefront of the agenda.



## Teacher Teaching the Community

Mr. Jahar Tarafder is the Headmaster of Chandranath Govt. Primary School in Sreemangal, Moulvibazar district of Northeastern Bangladesh is more than just a teacher. Being a resident of Sreemangal Municipality for years Mr. Jahar has stood firm against social challenges like child marriage, dowry, and harmful superstitions that held back the progress of the community. However, his journey took a striking turn when he embraced a new role he hadn't anticipated. Mr. Tarafder has become a key figure in mobilizing the community towards safely managed sanitation services. His involvement with MAC Bangladesh, a FANSA- Bangladesh member, to uniting community members for common causes, has positioned him as a pivotal advocate for change.



In the year 2022, Mr. Jahar Tarafder joined a Community-led Monitoring Team under the FANSA-Bangladesh-run *Rising for Rights Project*, implemented by MAC Bangladesh in Sreemangal Pourashava focusing on the promotion of City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) to be ensured by the LGIs. The participation in training programs on CWIS and Social Audits under the *Rising for Rights Project*, opened his eyes to the broader challenges his municipality faced concerning safely managed sanitation services. “I realized that a healthier environment is just as essential as education for the well-being of our community. True change begins with our habits when we adopt healthier practices both individually and as a collective, we lay the foundation for a better future,” Mr. Jahar reflects.

Leading by example, Mr. Jahar made the first move by closing off the sanitation lines of his home and school, which had previously drained into the municipality's sewerage system. His action shared a clear message across Sreemangal Pourashava. “When households connect their toilets directly to the drains, it's not just a violation of the law, it's an act that pollutes the water sources & environment and harms our health. If Sir can do it, why can't we?” Echoed through the community, inspiring a wave of cleaner & improved sanitation practices.

Mr. Jahar's advocacy extended beyond physical improvements. He organized community discussions and mobilized others to join the movement for better sanitation as an outcome of the accountable role-playing by the duty bearers. His voice soon reached other platforms, where he urged for greater access to improved sanitation & clean water and emphasized community involvement in taking the city's demand collectively to the duty bearers.

In 2024, Mr. Jahar's engagement in the advocacy initiative in mobilizing the people to demand inclusive sanitation

facilities in the city earned him an invitation to participate in the prestigious "Global Summit to Accelerate Progress towards Universal Access to Safely Managed Sanitation" organized by UNICEF & WHO from 25-27 June 2024 in Kathmandu, Nepal. Mr. Jahar upheld the roles & results of his advocacy as a community leader from Bangladesh in the side event titled "*Ensuring Safe Sanitation: Initiatives of Communities & CSOs*" at the Summit. Sharing the struggles of his city dwellers especially the women and other vulnerable groups, he passionately argued for the inclusion of their voices in policy-making concerning the safely managed sanitation promotion. His words struck a chord with the international audience, marking his arrival on the global stage.



Through his leadership, Mr. Jahar has sparked a movement in Sreemangal, changing more than just sanitation lines, he has transformed the mindsets of the city service providers. “It’s not just about fixing systems; it’s about shifting perspectives,” he explains. “Thanks to his relentless efforts in guiding us in observing the city’s sanitation and environment situation. Sreemangal is evolving into a cleaner, healthier, and more empowered community”. The Community-led Monitoring Team members echo their voices.

Mr. Jahar Tarafder has played a crucial role in advocating for city-wide inclusive sanitation by sensitizing the Mayor and municipal authorities, urging them to engage municipal staff and duty-bearers in sanitation efforts. This advocacy and community-led monitoring culminated in a comprehensive cleanliness drive that saw the joint participation of Government Officials, Sreemangal Municipality, CSOs, BNCC & Scouts and community representatives under the leadership of the *Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)*. The drive successfully cleared solid wastes at different sites in the city.

The Headmaster has become a key figure in mobilizing the community too towards safely managed sanitation services. His involvement with MAC Bangladesh in uniting community members for common causes, has positioned him as a pivotal advocate for change. "A teacher and an influencer like Mr. Jahar, his command is respected in our community. His dedication inspires us all, and we strive to follow his lead in promoting better practices and making our environment healthier," remarks a neighbor of the Headmaster. “When we come together and share our voices, we create a force that can’t be ignored,” he asserts.

## Monitoring Leads *Harijon* Community's Voice Heard

A *Harijon* community, whose members serve as the town's sanitation workers, has been living in deplorable conditions for years in Gaibandha Municipality's Ward No. 6. Despite playing a significant role in maintaining the municipality's cleanliness, this community has been consistently overlooked, lacking access to basic sanitation and clean water facilities. The *Harijon* community, responsible for maintaining public hygiene, is somehow forced to live in unsanitary conditions.



This long-standing issue finally gained attention through a civil society initiative aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6- clean water and sanitation for all. From August 19 to 29, 2024, the 7-member Community-led Monitoring Team under the *Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Network to Achieve SDG 6 Project* undertook a comprehensive survey of public and community toilets across the 9 Wards of the Gaibandha Municipality. The Monitoring Team found severe neglect in the *Harijon* community, where 30 residents rely just on a single, broken toilet and an uncovered Tube-well that provides unsafe drinking water. With no proper bathing facilities, they are left to use a district council pond, further compounding the lack of access to hygiene.

The voices of the *Harijon* community have long been unheard. One resident, Mr. Liton Basfor, said, "No one listens to us or gives any attention to us. We live ourselves isolated. The candidates come during the election, make promises, and then disappear." This has perpetuated their cycle of poor living conditions.

In line with its mandate, the Community-led Monitoring Team took their findings to the duty-bearers. On 5 September 2024, a pivotal meeting was held at SKS Inn in Gaibandha, where the vulnerable sanitation condition of *Harijon* community was shared as monitoring findings to the municipal authorities. Key officials, including Gaibandha Municipality's Chief Executive



Officer, Mr. Md. Arshad Uddin attended the sharing event. Ms. Shahnaz Chowdhury, the leader of the Community-led Monitoring Team, delivered a heartfelt plea regarding the Harijon community's dire water and sanitation conditions. She highlighted that 30 people relied on a single unhygienic toilet and an unsealed Tube-well for their water supply. As members of the *Harijon* community are responsible for maintaining the city's sanitation, she stressed the importance and demand for ensuring their well-being. "If they fall ill, our city's cleanliness will be at risk," she said, urging the authorities to provide proper sanitation facilities and access to clean water for the neglected *Harijon* community.



Ms. Shahnaz Chowdhury's voice, once a whisper, echoed through the meeting. The monitoring team's findings were heard, and their recommendations included urgent repairs to the town's public toilets, the construction of additional facilities, and immediate intervention in the *Harijon* community's water and sanitation crisis. To the surprise of many, the municipal authorities responded with promises of swift action, signaling hope for long-overdue change.



The *Rising for Rights Project* initiative has brought the unheard voices of the *Harijon* community to light, setting the stage for what could be a transformative moment. It has fostered collaboration between marginalized residents and municipal authorities, marking the first steps toward ensuring that no community is left behind in the pursuit of basic human dignity.

## Hat Bharatkhali Freed from Health Hazards

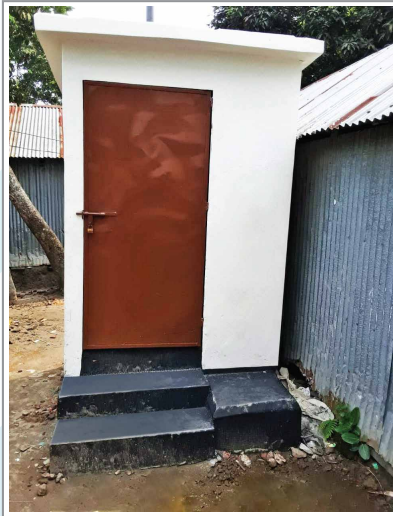
*Hat Bharatkahli* (Traditional Market), a bustling marketplace under the Muktinagar union of Saghata upazila, Gaibandha, located on the west bank of Jamuna River, is known for its cattle trading. Primarily cattle come from char areas and attract buyers and sellers from nearby and outside. The traditional *Hat* (market) is set up twice a week drawing large crowds. Despite the *Hat's* historical significance and vibrant mobility, it lacked essential public sanitation facilities. While there are temples, mosques and schools in the vicinity, their sanitation facilities remain locked and inaccessible to the public, leaving *hat*-goers with no option but to relieve themselves in open spaces or along the nearby riverbanks. This unhygienic practice posed significant health risks and environmental concerns.

Recognizing the severity of the issue, the local Nari Forum (Women Forum), in collaboration with the Community-led Monitoring Team, mobilized under the '*Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Network to Achieve SDG 6*' (*Rising for Rights Project*), conducted a comprehensive monitoring exercise. Their assessment found the urgent need for sanitation facilities in the *Hat* Bharatkahli and pointed out that the lack of toilets was the responsibility of the *Hat* Committee. Ms. Jhorna Begum, a member of the *Nari* Forum said, "Through monitoring the Hat Bharatkhali, we identified the urgent need for a public toilet at the *Hat*."

The *Nari* Forum and Community-led Monitoring Team jointly held discussions with the local Muktinagar Union Parishad stressing the need for a proper sanitation system to serve the hundreds of people visiting the *Hat* regularly. They emphasized that it was the Hat Committee's duty to ensure the market was equipped with basic sanitation facilities including some urination chambers to maintain hygiene, improve public health, and preserve the environment around.



As a result of persistent advocacy and awareness-raising efforts by the Nari Forum and the Community-led Monitoring Team collaborating with the Hat Committee, the Union Parishad realized the gravity of the need. Muktinagar Union Parishad agreed to construct at least a makeshift sanitation facility. Starting in the last week of May 2024, the Union Parishad completed the construction of a single Toilet along with 4-Chamber-Urination facilities on 2 July 2024. The Toilet and the Urination Chambers were strategically placed ensuring easy access for the hat-goers. These facilities within the Hat area have provided much-needed relief to the visitors.



The newly constructed Toilet & Urination Chambers have since helped reduce open urination, improved the overall hygiene of the marketplace, and contributed to a cleaner and more comfortable environment. A shopkeeper at the Hat Bharatkahli remarked, “The initiative taken jointly by the *Nari* Forum and the Monitoring Team stands as a testament to how community-driven advocacy can lead to positive change, ensuring that public spaces meet the basic needs of their users”.

“The construction of the Toilet & Urination Chambers in *Hat Bharatkahli* has marked a significant improvement in public health and hygiene, especially in the market where we had long suffered from a lack of basic sanitation facilities. The proactiveness and united power of the *Nari* Forum and Monitoring Team have improved the conditions for us- the hat-goers.” A local and a 55-year regular hat visitor namely Mr. Abdul Majid, expressed himself relieved much from the health & environmental hazards.

## Harijon Families Find A Future

In the heart of Sreemangal Municipality, Moulvibazar, lies the *Harijon Polli*, home to 70 sanitation worker families. These men and women, often socially isolated and neglected, have long toiled to keep the town clean, sweeping streets and collecting waste. Yet, for years, their community became the victim of a cruel irony- the garbage piled up right by their homes.

The waste didn't just come from their own households. Neighbors, seeing the *Harijon Polli* as beneath them, used to throw their household wastes into the area treating that as a dumping ground. The people of the community, lacking unity and knowledge of their rights, saw this as an unavoidable part of their existence. "We didn't know that we could change anything," said Mr. Sagar Basfor, the leader of the community and one of the residents. "It felt like this was our fate."

For years, the garbage pile grew, a silent testament to the community's struggles and the neglect they endured. That was until a turning point arrived in the form of a local group called the Community-led Monitoring Team, formed under the *Rising for Rights Project* supported by FANSA-Bangladesh. Dedicated to promoting sanitation and hygiene, this Team saw not just a garbage pile but an opportunity to bring change.



The Community-led Monitoring Team engaged the Harijon families, raising awareness about their right to a clean and healthy environment. "We showed them that they didn't have to live like this," said S.A Hamid, Executive Director of MAC Bangladesh and a member of the Monitoring Team. "We helped them see that they could demand something better, that they deserve something better concerning their healthy living."

Empowered with knowledge and a newfound sense of community, the *Harijon* families united and approached the municipality requesting a garbage



truck to remove the waste. With the support of the Monitoring Team, they worked tirelessly to clear the decades-old pile of trash. Over two days, what had once been an eyesore and a health hazard disappeared, and in its place, a playground emerged- a space for their children to run, play, and laugh. “It was a turning point for us,” said Rani Harijon, one of the community members. “We were no longer helpless; we took control.”

But the transformation didn’t stop at the playground. The regular observation of the situation by the Community-led Monitoring Team jointly with the *Nari Forum* (Women Forum) formed under the *Rising for Rights Project* knocked the local CSOs & allies. Mobilized they took their advocacy to the Sreemangal Municipality demanding that the authorities recognize the *Harijon* families' years of neglect. The Municipality finally responded not just by cleaning the area but by committing to an extraordinary project- a multi-storied building at the cleaned site that would house 24 sanitation worker families, giving them safe, clean, and permanent housing.



For the *Harijon* families, the starting of construction of the building on the former waste site marked a monumental shift. The place that once symbolized hardship was now a beacon of hope. "We never thought we would live in such a place," said Ms. Sumi Harijon, a *Harijon* resident, smiling. "Now, we are expecting that have a home where we can raise our children with pride." “This building is more than just bricks and cement,” said Engr. Mohammed Zaherul Islam, Executive Engineer, Sreemangal Municipality. “It’s a symbol of the community’s resilience and their right to dignity.”

## Nari Forum Breaks the Barrier

Saghata Upazila Complex of Gaibandha district is a key facility serving the local population including a significant number of female employees and service recipients. However, despite the regular presence of women, there were no dedicated toilet facilities for them. This lack of provision created discomfort and posed a critical challenge to sanitation facilities for the women accessing or working at the complex.

This, the absence of separately marked toilets for women, came to the attention of the *Nari Forum* (Women Forum) members, a local pressure group formed & mobilized under the *Rising for Rights Project* advocating for the promotion of inclusive sanitation in Saghata upazila. The Nari Forum pointed out the importance of safe and accessible sanitation for women, and highlighted how the lack of facilities disproportionately affected female employees and visitors in the Upazila Complex for years.



Realizing the urgency of the issue, *Nari Forum* members visited the *Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)* on 12 May 2024 and raised their concerns. Ms. Mousumi Begum, president of the local *Nari Forum* argued, “Every day, hundreds of women visit the Upazila Complex to receive the government’s safety-net services and meet other requirements. Women who come here for services suffer a lot from a lack of sanitation facilities. Therefore, we demand a separate toilet, especially for women.”

The UNO welcomed the *Nari* Forum's demand and appreciated their proactive action. The UNO then immediately responded by issuing an order to dedicate at least one toilet chamber exclusively for women at the complex. This positive decision was made to ensure that women should have access to basic sanitation facilities, which is a critical component of gender-inclusive services.

As a result of the *Nari* Forum's advocacy move and the swift response from the UNO, a toilet chamber has been specially designated for women. Alongside improving the sanitation conditions, pressure creation by the *Nari* Forum has also ensured that female employees and service recipients now have access to sanitation facilities with greater comfort. Mr. Farid Ahmed, Executive Director of the Women Development Program (WDP) and FANSA-Bangladesh member says, "Getting the allocation of a separate toilet, women feel comfort and dignity at the UNO office. They can now wait for long for their required purposes at the Upazila Complex. This example has set a precedent for addressing similar issues in other areas contributing to more inclusive and equitable public services."



## Community Demand Turns the Toilet Inclusive

At the heart of Gaibandha town, the Old Jail Road intersection is a busy hub, connecting the local market, schools and essential facilities. Recognizing its importance as a public place and need, Gaibandha Municipality built a Public Toilet attached to a passenger shelter at this intersection in 2017. After construction, the Public Toilet was leased out to a local operator. However, what initially seemed promising, quickly turned into a problem. The facility was abandoned becoming simply a dumping ground for wastes.



The problem stemmed from poor planning. The Toilet's pit was too small, filling up within days, and regular cleaning became difficult due to inconsistent vacuum tanker services. Although a septic tank was constructed later, it was never connected, leaving the Toilet unusable and abandoned.

In 2024, a change began brewing, spearheaded by FANSA-BD's *Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Network to Achieve SDG 6 Project (Rising for Rights Project)*, the local change-makers, particularly the *Nari Forum* (Women Forum) and the *Community-led Monitoring Team*, started advocacy with local municipality for the promotion of *Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS)*. Being facilitated by the member and Secretariat of FANSA- Bangladesh,

these community leaders chalked out the critical need for inclusive sanitation and launched a persistent advocacy campaign for safely managed sanitation services including constructing and turning the Public Toilets inclusive by the Municipal Authority.





Their efforts began with a meeting early in February 2024, where the *Nari Forum*, formed & mobilized under the *Rising for Rights Project*, decided to go for sensitizing and demanding people's rights to the municipality calling for an increase in the WASH budget and improvements to Public Toilet facilities. Alongside the conduction of Community Campaigns, Community-led Monitoring of sanitation facilities & waste management, Social Audits, Dialogue with the Duty Bearers, etc, on 2 May 2024, the *Nari Forum* submitted a formal memorandum to the Mayor of Gaibandha Municipality, urging for increased WASH budget and better sanitation facility management in the city.

To assess the existing sanitation conditions, a special monitoring drive was conducted by the Community-led Monitoring Team, integrating the *Nari Forum* members, from 10-29 August 2024. During the monitoring visit, on 24 August 2024, in Ward 1, the team found a previously open Public Toilet was then standing closed and had been turned into a makeshift waste dumping point. The findings were shared with the Gaibandha Municipal Authority in a formal sharing meeting on 5 September 2024. In response, the municipality acknowledged and showed its accountability to reopen the Public Toilet seeking a token of support from the *Rising for Rights Project*.

On 8 September 2024, a collaborative meeting took place with participation from the Municipality Authority, *Nari Forum*, and the Community-led Monitoring Team. Together, they chalked out a plan to revive the Public Toilet, and responsibilities were split accordingly. The Municipality performed the repairing of the toilet house & restoring the electricity connection, ensuring a steady water supply, and cleaning the surrounding area, while the *Rising for Rights Project* added the facility targeting turning it into an Inclusive Public Toilet with access for women and people with disabilities having special facilities for them.



Mr. Jahirul Islam, a resident with physical disabilities, expresses his relief: "For so long, there were no toilets in the city that we could use. Though it took time, I'm grateful to the authorities for finally addressing the inclusivity issue."

Mr. Md. Abdul Hanif, *Pouro Nirbahi Officer (PNO)*, emphasized the importance of partnership: "No one achieves anything alone. Together, the municipality, SKS Foundation, and the community groups like the Women Forum made this happen playing an advocacy role." The advocacy campaign resulted in a positive outcome. The combined efforts of the Nari Forum, the Community-led Monitoring Team, and Gaibandha Municipality under the facilitation of SKS Foundation innovated the Old Jail Road Public Toilet into an Inclusive

Public Toilet. Improvements included connecting the facility to the long-neglected septic tank, installing a ramp for accessibility, and refurbishing the structure to create an inclusive facility with a clean environment.

Mr. Md. Shafiqul Islam, *Advocacy Specialist for the Rising for Rights Project*, highlighted the broader issue: "Public Toilets across Gaibandha and the country are in poor condition. They lack inclusivity and many have fallen into disrepair. However, with proper renovation, these facilities can once again serve everyone, and become accessible to all. The revival of this Public Toilet is a small but significant step towards the promotion of inclusive sanitation.



## SKS Foundation

College Road, Uttar Horin Singha, Gaibandha-5700, Bangladesh

+88-02588877630 +88-02588877631 +880 1713 484430

sksfoundation@sk-s-bd.org, sksfoundation.bd@gmail.com

### Dhaka Office:

SKS Bhaban, House # 2, Road # 16, Sector # 3, Uttara, Dhaka - 1230

+88-0241091499 +880 1713 484485

[www.sk-s-bd.org](http://www.sk-s-bd.org) [sksfoundation](https://www.youtube.com/sksfoundation) [sksfoundationbd](https://www.facebook.com/sksfoundationbd) [sks.foundation](https://www.instagram.com/sks.foundation)