Workshop Report

On

“Safe water and improved sanitation always adds value to the women’s lifestyle”

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(BWWN)
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**Introduction:**

Bangladesh Women and Water Network (BWWN) has organized a half day workshop on “Safe water and improved sanitation always adds value to the women’s lifestyle” with the financial support of Bangladesh Water Partnership (BWP) on 14 November 2015 at the Conference Room, AKM Giasuddin Milky Auditorium, Department of Agricultural Extension, Khamar Bari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215.

**Objective:**

The objective of the workshop was to enhance awareness among the participants on uses of safe water and improved sanitation for better lifestyle. A total number of 29 participants, from grass root level women, women organization, different water user groups, different GOs & NGOs working with water & sanitation etc. participated in the workshop.

**Inaugural Session**

The workshop was presided over by Begum Shamsun Nahar, Coordinator of BWWN & Gender and Development Specialist. There were two session in the workshop i.e. inaugural session and technical session.

Dr. Nilufa Islam, Steering Committee member of BWWN and Ex-Director General of WARPO chaired the inaugural session. She highly appreciated the multi-disciplinary participations and encouraged to develop network especially with women headed organizations.
Begum Shamsun Nahar, Coordinator of BWWN & Gender and Development Specialist, presented the historical background of BWWN and support of BWP/GWP towards BWWN. She informed that to create awareness among the women BWWN works with special heightened on grass-root-level on Water management and its impact on women and their livelihoods. In her speech Begum Shamsun Nahar emphasized on safe water and good sanitation facilities for women. She informed that females are engaged to manage water, maintain water as well as collect water all the year round. She suggested equal active participation of male and female in water management.

Dr. Azharul Haq, Vice-president of BWP and Former-Managing Director of Dhaka WASA discussed about women’s participation in BWP/GWP, its achievement and future strategies. Dr. Haq graced the event as special guest. He informed that women are now advance and they are working in the leading position in different sectors. He informed that GWP/BWP is truly gender balanced organization; the president of GWP is also women. Dr. Haq also informed BWP always try to involve women in its activities. Dr. Haq emphasized on women’s safety and rights. He suggested for women development and gender balance for the development of the country.
The workshop was attended by two successful women who struggled a lot to improve their livelihoods. They shared their experiences on how they overcome their extreme poverty and the story becomes the role model for their reliant activities. One of them is Mrs. Rupbhanu, Member of Water Management Cooperative Association, Laxmipur, who is now a successful farmer with a better lifestyle. She also visited India to promote community poor women by sharing her ideas and practical knowledge.

Another successful woman is Mrs. Kamrun Nahar, Member of Water Management Cooperative Association, Cox’s Bazar shared her success stories with the house. She informed that she is engaged with child education, improved sanitation and tube well facilities in her localities with the cooperation of local women. At first she started a Somiti with extreme poor women and now they have access to their own house and necessary equipments such like sewing machines and cloths. She also inspires community poor women to cultivate vegetable to improve their livelihood which further enhance them to be self-sufficient.
The Inaugural Speech was provided by the Chief Guest Md. Shahidul Hassan, President of BWP and Ex-Chief Engineer of LGED. Mr. Hassan said that safe water and improved sanitation is equally important for both men and women. He expressed satisfaction for the development of BWWN and wished for the greatest development of this organization in future. Mr. Hassan also informed that traditionally, women living in villages have neither direct linkage to income or access to resources and as housewives, they solely dependent of the income earned by their husbands. He also informed that now-a-days this condition of women are changing and female are more advance than the past times. Mr. Hassan inspired BWWN to go forward with its broad goals and objectives. He assured that BWWN would be successful for raising fund for its development.

Ms. Mukta Akter, Executive Secretary of BWP and Member Secretary of BWWN presented a paper on a synopsis of BWWN activities of last 5 years. In her presentation she narrated the formation history of BWWN and major activities implemented by BWWN over the last five years (from 2011-2015). She informed the house that BWWN works in
association with BWP and its main objective is to incorporate professional women as well as women from grassroot level in water sector. During her presentation she strongly emphasized to develop strong network through local level to national level. She also informed that the mission of BWWN is to empower women by capacity building programs on Water & Climate Change Issues and enhance their involvement on IWRM, Water Supply & Sanitation through an organized voice. She also informed that the network also aims to invest in women’s leadership, personal and political empowerment and enable women to develop the solution in poverty eradication, participation of women in decision making and implementation. Further she emphasized on youth engagement actively to make the BWWN’s action more functioning towards gender equity and women empowerment.

**Technical Session**

Technical Session of the workshop was chaired by Begum Shamsun Nahar, Coordinator of BWWN. Two papers were presented in this session.

Dr. Salma Begum, Professor of Khulna University and Member of BWWN presented a paper on “Safe water and improved sanitation – how far have we come?” In her presentation she mentioned that ‘Improved’ sanitation generally involves physically closer facilities, less waiting time, and safer disposal of excreta, including septic tank, simple pit latrine, or ventilated improved pit-latrine. Prof. Dr. Salma emphasized on the arsenic poisoning in drinking water due to the increasing use of groundwater. She mentioned that lack of safe water, sanitation and hygiene remains one of the world’s most urgent health issues. Dr. Salma informed that water management performed as female-dominated practices and typical water carrying methods impose physical loading with
potential to produce musculoskeletal disorders (such as neck or back pain) and related disability. She informed the house that water for personal and domestic hygiene is important in reducing the rates of different diseases. Dr. Salma suggested that greater attention should be needed to better understand and manage drinking water safety. Further she assured that better management of water would be possible when women and men make decisions together in the changing environment.

Ms. Hasibun Nahar Khanam, Consultant at FAO and Steering Committee member of BWWN presented her paper on "The fragile state of water and basic sanitation in Haor and South West region of Bangladesh is putting women’s survival in risk". Ms. Khanam emphasized on the sufferings of the people living in south-west region of Bangladesh and the four districts of greater Sylhet namely Sunamgonj, Moulvibazar, Hobigonj and Sylhet due to flooding and water logging. She informed that water logging severely affects women’s health of the affected community; pregnant women cannot continue movement in marooned and slippery conditions, they are forced to stay back inside the house and ultimately fall victim to unhygienic reproductive health condition.

Ms. Khanam also informed that the absence of safe sanitation services and inadequate supply of safe drinking water has been culminated into rather high rates of water-borne diseases, including skin diseases and reproductive health disorders. According to her presentation, it was reported that a large majority of women had been suffering from acute vaginal infection and other reproductive health disorders. Ms. Khanam further said that southwest region waterlogged often
submerges the latrines and leads to sufferings especially for women and girls. Moreover she informed that women and adolescent girls are sometimes harassed by men and young boys when they go out to collect water and the skin of adolescent girls becomes rough and unattractive and creates pain during menstruation due to the use of saline water. Some recommendations were made by Ms. Khanam which is as follows:

- Ponds should be dug to provide drinking water to those areas where deep or shallow tube well do not get water layers.
- High sanitary latrine should be built or provided for use of the people during water logging
- All tube well water should be tested and marked with red colour if arsenic is traced.
- The need for repair of damaged water sources or ensuring pure drinking water through harvest of rain water is very important.

**Open Discussion:**

In the workshop there was an open discussion session where most of the participants actively participated.

Ms. Taslima Imam, Meteorologist of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) informed about some water and sanitation projects. Ms. Imam suggested for considering climate change factors in each projects regarding as the tube wells and toilet. She informed that women feel shy and uneasy to use common/public toilet. Ms. Imam also suggested to facilitate female toilet. Further Ms. Imam emphasized on female knowledge development on sustainable agriculture.

Among the participants Ms. Irin Sultana, Gender Specialist, Char Development Sector Program-IV suggested for better management of cyclone shelters with the assurance of female safety. She shared her ideas on cyclone shelter management; suggested to raise awareness program among
the vulnerable group of the coastal areas. She expressed her willing about the paper presentation on gender equality and gender sensitization in the next program of BWWN.

Ms. Musfika Laizu, Gender Specialist, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) emphasized on gender and water issue. She shared her bitter experience on women’s sanitation problem in government organization. Ms. Laizu suggested for prioritize women’s decision making on water and sanitation.

Ms. Nazmun Nahar Chowdhury, Member of BWWN and Librarian, Water Resource Planning Organization (WARPO) suggested for facilitating women friendly toilet and proper maintenance of the public toilets and female toilets at different levels i.e. offices, restaurants, markets, streets etc.

Ms. Bushra Faruque, Research Assistant, Investment Planning, Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 of Mott Macdonald shared her thoughts on inadequate street toilet facility for female.

Ms. Sabria Afrin, Junior Specialist, Water Resources Division of Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS) shared her field experience on severe salinity problem in the southwest region of Bangladesh. She informed that women are getting infected by ‘uterus cancer’ after the age of 25 due to high salinity problem in that area.

In the concluding session, Begum Shamsun Nahar emphasized on safe water and toilet safety for female. The workshop was ended with vote of thanks by Ms. Naima Nazir, Member of BWWN and Research Assistant of BWP.

**Outcome:**

The Workshop successfully sensitized the women about safe water and improved sanitation. It also encouraged youth participants to be engaged proactively with Integrated Water Resources Management as well as Climate issues considering the real world situation.
ANNEX – (i)

List of Participants

1. Mr. Md. Sahidul Hassan, President, Bangladesh Water Partnership & Former Chief Engineer, LGED
2. Dr. K. Azharul Haq, Vice President, Bangladesh Water Partnership & Former Managing Director, Dhaka WASA.
3. Begum Shamsun Nahar, Coordinator, Bangladesh Woman and Water Network
4. Dr. Nilufa Islam, Member of BWWN & Former Director General, WARPO and EC member of BWP, RC member of SA GWP
5. Ms. Mukta Akter, Executive Secretary, Bangladesh Water Partnership & Member secretary of BWWN
7. Ms. Lene Henriette Norgaard, Intern, SWECO
8. Ms. Amanda From, Intern, SWECO
9. Ms. Suraya Akter Daisy, Graphic Designer, SWECO
10. Ms. Irin Sultana, GSA, CDSP-IV
11. Ms. Shahnara, Member, Raipur
12. Ms. Easmin Akter, Member, Raipur
14. Ms. Hashibur Nahar khanam, Consultant, Bis Idea Consultant
15. Ms. Sultana Rajia Rupu, Laxmipur
16. Ms. Nazmun Nahar Chowdury, WARPO
17. Ms. Rupbhanu Begum, Noakhali
18. Ms. Mowsumi Khan, Munshiganj
19. Ms. Kamran munia, Munshiganj
20. Ms. Sabria Afrin, Junior Specialist, CEGIS
21. Ms. Rakshanda Mabin, Junior Specialist, CEGIS
22. Ms. Tanjia Akter, Junior Engineer, IWM
23. Ms. Taslima Imam, Senior Metrologies, BMD
24. Ms. Bushra Faruque, Research Assistant, Mott Macdonald
25. Dr. Salma Begum, Environmental Science Discipline, Khulna university
26. Ms. Naima Nazir, Member, BWWN & Research Assistant, BWP
27. Ms. Lima Khatun, Member, BWWN & Account officer, BWP
28. Ms. Sarmin Sultana, Member, BWWN & Admin & Account Assistant, BWP
29. Ms. N.R. Mushka Laiju, Gender Specialist, BCAS
ANNEX – (ii)

**Photo Gallery**

Views of the workshop