

**Statement by the Government of Bangladesh for the Sanitation and Water for All
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Bangladesh Representatives:
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Bangladesh has made steady progress towards provision of improved basic water supply and sanitation facilities for its 150 million people. However, it still faces many challenges. Arsenic contamination, increased salinity problem in groundwater in the coastal belt, declining groundwater levels in large parts of the country, susceptibility to the impacts of natural disasters and climate change pose significant risks to both the availability and safety of drinking water. The water scarcity in dry season is exacerbated by climate change and water redistribution amongst the Ganges-Brahmaputra river basin countries. The high population density, poverty, rapid urbanisation, lack of space for individual latrines in rural and urban areas have a negative impact on the progress in sanitation while cyclones and flooding spread pathogens and destroy the facilities. The Government of Bangladesh is working with its development partners to build on the success already achieved to address these new challenges.

A. Political Prioritisation for Water and Sanitation

The Government of Bangladesh endorses the guiding principles of the Sanitation and Water for All. It is committed to ensure safe water supply and sanitation for all by 2011 and 2013 respectively. To aim for a goal higher than the MDG target reflects the Government's commitment to address an issue that impacts the general well being of its people. The Government has expanded the annual development budget allocations to the sector from an average of 2.5 per cent between 2000 and 2007 to about 5 per cent of total development funds available in 2009.

Adequate sector financing is a crucial issue for meeting the MDGs and national targets for water supply and sanitation. The recent draft Sector Investment Plan (SIP) by the Local Government Division shows that the sector requires US \$1,911 million investment for the period of 2010-2015. Funds committed are US \$1,345 million, shared between the Government (US \$716 million) and development partners (US \$629 million). This leaves a funding gap of US \$567 million. Addressing the issue of arsenic contamination alone would necessitate an investment of US \$200 million.

B. Evidence-based decision-making

The Government of Bangladesh has taken part in the Global Annual Assessment of the Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) survey 2009. A sanitation census is planned to be undertaken in 2010 to gain a better understanding of the gaps in the coverage and to ensure improved local level planning and better targeting of resources. In line with the Government's vision of Digital Bangladesh, a National Management Information System for the sector is proposed.

Bangladesh has seen an unprecedented decline in open defecation since 1990 while the use of improved latrines has dramatically increased. Due to its population density, latrines are shared. The Government is in the process to determine whether those are hygienic. In spite of a higher percentage of sanitation coverage in the urban areas compared to the rural, the actual sanitation situation is worse in urban slums. The use of on-site sanitation (pit latrines and septic tanks) is not appropriate in many areas due to lack of space and this increases the risk of groundwater contamination. Different off-site approaches and shared facilities are needed in such high-density areas which require high investment costs.

The challenge is to sustain behaviour change in hygiene practices that brings greater health benefit. To this end, the Government of Bangladesh is developing a comprehensive National Hygiene Promotion Strategy.

At present, 98 percent of the population has access to an improved water supply source¹. This remarkable achievement is compromised by excessive levels of arsenic contamination. New data of 2009 indicate that access to improved source of safe drinking water adjusted for arsenic contamination has risen to 86%¹. Today there is still 20 million people drinking water with unsafe level of arsenic. In addition many people still consume water that is contaminated by bacteria at source, in transit or at the point of use. Water borne infectious diseases is a great burden. The Government of Bangladesh is committed to create a conducive environment and mobilise a significant investment in order to achieve the Safe Water for All goal, including the creation of a special fund of US \$200 million to provide arsenic-safe water.

Safe drinking water, sanitation, and drainage situation in the densely populated urban slums and fringes is precarious. The urban poor in slums and squatter settlements are least able to overcome this service deficiency through private sector provisioning. Continued urban migration of more people make the task of providing safe drinking water a monumental challenge for urban poor.

As the effects of climate change are felt, it will become even more important to invest in resilient water supply and sanitation systems to ensure the availability and safety of the water supply, as well as appropriate sanitation options that do not further stress water supplies nor pollute the water resources.

C. National Planning Processes

The Government of Bangladesh is currently revising its Sector Development Programme (SDP) for water supply and sanitation. The revised SDP of 2010 will provide clear directions and ascribe accountability. It will provide a clear framework for the sector development. More specifically it will outline the strategic development plan for large cities, secondary and small towns and rural areas. The corresponding Sector Investment Plan (SIP), sector reform, capacity building plans and roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders will be delineated according to the SDP.

The Government's Perspective Plan and the 6th Five-Year Development Plan as well as programmes implemented by development partners shall conform to the SDP priorities. Government intends signalling its commitment to the water sector consistent to the SDP through increased allocations in the Medium Term Expenditure Forecast.

The Government of Bangladesh recognizes the need for reforms in the sector and is committed to initiate measures promoting decentralised service delivery as an overarching sector framework. This would include enhancing the capacity of local authorities to partner with the private sector and civil society in delivering services, extending the authority of local government institutions over all service providers, strengthening accountability of service providers/local government institutions to consumers and communities and reinforcing the regulatory role of sector lead agency.

D. Concluding Remarks

The Government of Bangladesh will take the necessary steps to reform service delivery, build the capacity of sector institutions and reduce the water supply and sanitation financing gap of US \$600 million by at least one third (US \$200 million), and hopefully more through innovative financing tools.

¹ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2009