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WATER HARVESTING IN COASTAL UPAZILAS

# From scarcity to security

NILIMA JAHAN

Archana Rani, 36, a homemaker from coastal upazila Assasuni in Satkhira, struggled for 23 years to collect drinking water from faraway sources that were often salty and contaminated with arsenic.

Initially, Archana used to walk an hour to a neighbouring village to collect water, sometimes multiple trips per day. Even when fetching water from her village, she had to walk half an hour and wait in long queues, paying Tk 6 for a pitcher of water.

This strenuous task caused her back pain which worsened during her periods. During her pregnancy, she had to carry the water alone as her husband was often away for work.

Fortunately, UNDP's Gender-responsive Coastal Adaptation (GCA) project, with financial assistance from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the government, helped 13,308 households in Khulna and Satkhira districts harvest rainwater using a 2,000-litre tank.

Rainwater harvesting systems provided relief to families, especially mothers responsible for fetching water, allowing them to collect enough

water during the rainy season to last through the dry seasons. "The system is simple yet effective," said Mainul Islam, GCA's water and sanitation specialist at UNDP.

"We installed a 60 square feet tin roof as a self-catchment system to collect rainwater in every house. The water passes through a primary filtration system to remove larger particles, followed by a pre-filtration unit to remove solid substances and microorganisms."

Mainul also mentioned that around 20,000 households will receive drinking water from 288 community water facilities provided by DPHE. Among them, 25 facilities have been handed over to communities, and work continues in another 210 sites. The remaining 53 sites are expected to be completed by 2024.

Archana said last week's rain helped her harvest 800 litres of water, which they can use for the next few months.



"We hope to collect sufficient water by the end of the season if there is enough rainfall."

Sunita Rani Sarker from Khulna's Paikgachha had a similar story. "Collecting drinking water was a struggle for 18 years, even during painful periods, pregnancy, and recovering from a caesarean

delivery. Now, I don't have to spend money on water and can contribute to my family by working in others' fields," she said.

The project team conducts quality checks every three months and provides timely repairs if needed. It also created employment opportunities for 101 women, trained to install and maintain rainwater harvesting systems, known as "Pani

Apas" in these areas.

Parbati Gain, a widow from Assasuni, is one such Pani Apa who regularly cleans the catchment, gutter, and filter of 301 households in ward 9 of Khajra union.

"Each household pays me Tk 20 for my services, which helps me support myself and my son," said Parbati.

A survey conducted by the GCA Project in February 2021 found that 63 percent of the population, faced difficulties in accessing drinking water, with the water crisis lasting for more than six months for 51 percent of the population.

GCA Project tested 666 tube wells and found only 27 percent of them met Bangladesh's salinity standard, while for ponds, it was 48 percent. Women in 74 percent of households were responsible for getting drinking water, reflecting the burden of unpaid work.

Households in the project area spent much more on the water than city consumers, with an average of Tk 642 or Tk 842 per month, compared to the average monthly cost of Tk 200 for all-purpose water supply in cities. The project aims to provide safe drinking water solutions to 31,000 households through six options.

'Report has fundamental shortcomings'

Shahriar Alam on US rights report

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam has said the US human rights report released on Monday has some fundamental shortcomings, which Dhaka will raise with Washington in the upcoming bilateral engagement.

The US Department of State's 2022 report on Human Rights Practices reported that the recent elections in Bangladesh, including the national elections of 2018, were not free and fair, and that there were incidents of disappearances, though the number of extrajudicial killings has declined significantly.

The report also highlighted several other issues, including the lack of press freedom, labour rights, freedom of assembly, and migrants

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## MY DHAKA

# Involving community to paint garbage depot



**RBR**

Completely immersed in work, Tanmoy, 36, has not gone home for the last five days. He is busy painting a garbage depot at Jollad Khana Garbage Secondary Transfer Station (STS) in Mirpur-13. STS is the place where all the garbage is dumped before taking them outside Dhaka.

Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy is a cartoonist by profession, an art educator of Artolution, and the founding member of Cartoon People.

Tanmoy's recent assignment -- a pilot project of non-government organisations Shakti Foundation and MetLife Foundation, and Dhaka North City Corporation -- is to paint a mural.

With the painting almost complete, the garbage depot, with strokes of white, blue, green, and yellow, looks almost inviting, if not for the stench.

A group of 15 young girls and boys from Cartoon People are painting the depot walls and changing the look of the community. The setting surrounding the painting has taken on the form of a carnival, with loud music playing at the backdrop.

Community art gives people relief as it involves the entire neighbourhood taking part

in the painting, and as a result, they start to own it as theirs. A rickshaw-puller casually requested Tanmoy to paint his rickshaw; a boy named Shanto walked in and showed interest to work on the project.



kept my art accessible so that the garbage collectors here, the bhangari [scrap] shop owners at the opposite, the rickshaw pullers passing by -- all can take part in this huge wall painting."

Imran Ahmed, deputy executive director of Shakti Foundation, one of the largest national NGOs that works throughout Bangladesh with a prime focus on climate change, said, "We are incorporating art to convert the ugly into something beautiful. As part of the programme, we take rundown places and convert them into green, public spaces and engage the community so that they can take care of the place as well. We want to keep the city green and clean. Dhaka North City Corporation is very helpful in this regard."

Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy's latest work is a 10-day project and is to be inaugurated by the DNCC mayor on March 26.

30pc women journo in all media orgs

**Demands Nari Sangbadik Kendra at event marking its 22nd anniv**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All media organisations should ensure that at least 30 percent of their journalists are women, demanded Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra at its 22nd anniversary yesterday.

The organisation for women journalists was commemorating the event at Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

It also demanded all media organisations make space for daycare centres.

In addition, Nari Sangbadik Kendra told all organisations to ensure that their female staff enjoy paid maternity leaves as per the labour law, and are not discriminated against for going on maternity leaves.

It also called for an end to discrimination against women in the newsroom, particularly when it comes to assigning beats, promotions and scope for training.

The Kendra demanded that all media organisations formulate a gender policy and appoint a sexual-harassment prevention committee.

Speaking at the event, Shyamal Dutta, editor of Samakal, said journalism in

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LONG-TERM COVID EFFECTS

# Women, elderly worst sufferers

Researchers share findings of follow-up study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Covid-19 survivors, particularly women and the elderly, carry a high burden of long-term effects of Covid-19 infection, often described as post Covid-19 syndrome (PCS) or long Covid, revealed a study.

The prevalence of post-Covid complications was found to be 1.5 to 4 times higher in females than in males, according to the study titled "Long-Term Sequelae of Covid-19: A Longitudinal Follow-Up Study in Dhaka, Bangladesh".

Meanwhile, Covid-19 survivors above 60 years face long-term complications, double those aged less than 40.

The results highlight the need for continuous follow-up and care of Covid-19 survivors, researchers said while sharing the study at an event at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) yesterday.

A guideline titled "Long Covid Clinical Management Guideline for Physicians" was also launched at the event.

A team of researchers at BSMMU and the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease and Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b) jointly conducted the study on 362 Covid-19 patients, aged 18 years and above between December 15, 2020, and October 30, 2021.

All of them were treated at two Covid-19 dedicated hospitals in Dhaka after they tested Covid-19 positive in RT-PCR test.

The participants were given comprehensive in-person follow-ups on the first, third and fifth months after their recovery, to evaluate the presence of post-covid-19 symptoms, which include neurological, cardiac, respiratory outcomes, and mental health.

Prof Shohaef Mahmud Arafat, chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine at BSMMU; Prof Chowdhury Meshkat Ahmed, Department of Cardiology at BSMMU; and Prof Sharfuddin Ahmed, vice chancellor of BSMMU were present at the event.

Farzana Afroze, associate scientist of the Nutrition and Clinical Service Division at the icddr,b and the principal investigator of the study presented the key findings.

Asked why females suffer from post-Covid complications more than males, Dr Nazmul Hasan, associate professor of internal at BSMMU and member of the study team, said, "We have not investigated the reasons. However, it may be because females usually have less immunity and access to healthcare than males in our country."

Researchers also said long-term complications among hospitalised patients and those needing intensive care were 2.3 times more likely than the non-hospitalised patients.

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PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra celebrated its 22nd anniversary at the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday. At the event, the organisation made multiple demands on behalf of women journalists, which include daycare centres at all media organisations, paid maternity leave, and appointment of sexual-harassment prevention committees.