

Sumaiya T. Ahmed
Head of Sustainability,
PRAN-RFL Group



The private sector can tailor market policies to address fundamental challenges by analysing local needs. We seek your input to understand the situation on the ground. We continuously invest in innovation, keeping consumers at the centre.

We are eager to collaborate with WASH and hygiene projects to drive meaningful impact. Achieving more requires collaboration, not individual effort, and I commit to being a partner in developing innovative, gender-inclusive WASH facilities.

Peter Maes
Chief of WASH,
UNICEF Bangladesh



It is crucial to recognise that one-third of children in urban LICs lack access to a proper water supply, and half do not have adequate sanitation facilities. Children living in LICs face a 30% higher health risk than their peers.

These issues are deeply interconnected—when a child contracts diseases like diarrhoea, their nutritional intake suffers, leading to stunted growth and impaired cognitive development. This, in turn, affects their education, future economic prospects, and, ultimately, the nation's overall development.

Additionally, poor WASH conditions contribute to anxiety, stress, and increased risks of gender-based violence. Young girls are particularly vulnerable, as many toilets lack menstrual hygiene facilities, making it difficult for them to attend school regularly. Studies have shown that improving WASH infrastructure can reduce school absenteeism by up to 15%, which is a significant impact.

Md. Manir Hossain
Additional Director (Deputy Secretary),
Department of Women Affairs, Ministry of
Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA)



The Department of Women's Affairs, operating under MoWCA, is key in providing programmes and facilities for women nationwide. The draft action plan for WASH, currently focused on Dhaka's two city corporations, should be expanded to all city corporations and pourashavas.

Public sanitation facilities are inadequate, and expanding them requires public-private collaboration. Infrastructure development alone is not enough; participation from local governments, city corporations, and stakeholders is essential, ideally through public-private partnerships.

Partha Hefaz Shaikh
Director – Programmes and Policy Advocacy,
WaterAid Bangladesh



In 2003, we launched a sanitation movement. After that, the government and local authorities took ownership of the programme, engaging with NGOs and the private sector. While NGOs and private entities are still involved, ensuring that the government leads the programme with strong political will and prioritises awareness is crucial.

The government must actively participate as a key player in executing these programmes in coordination with the local government institutions. At the same time, NGOs and the private sector should also contribute significantly to accelerating gender-inclusive urban WASH initiatives. We must reconsider how to make community engagement more meaningful and effective.

Dr. Mohammed Helal Uddin
Executive Vice Chairman, Microcredit
Regulatory Authority (MRA)



In Dhaka, rickshaw pullers and other disadvantaged groups lack access to proper toilets, highlighting a significant gap in development.

ment efforts. Similar challenges extend beyond the two city corporations to poverty-stricken areas nationwide.

Beyond WASH, women's safety remains a critical concern. Introducing facilities such as ATM-style water dispensers and community bathing spaces for women, managed by the community with private sector support, could improve access, hygiene, and income generation.

We must adopt innovative strategies to ensure the safety of women and children accessing WASH facilities. Regarding financing, our Microfinance Institution (MFI) window has the potential to offer subsidised loans for this purpose. However, despite the availability of funds, investments in WASH remain limited due to a lack of clear policy direction.

Upon receiving initial reports from MFIs, I thoroughly assess the necessary funding and its intended use before granting final approval. I am committed to approving funding requests for WASH facilities, provided that MFIs submit formal proposals. Therefore, the demand must come from the MFIs to facilitate resource allocation for WASH.

Rasheda K. Chowdhury
Charge of Coordination, CSO Alliance



The issue of WASH facilities must be continuously advocated as the current situation remains unsatisfactory, despite the efforts of numerous organisations over the years. WASH is not just a gender issue but a fundamental development priority.

Several successful models of inclusive WASH exist in Dhaka and should be replicated in all LIC areas. We need robust, evidence-based data to guide policy to achieve sustainable solutions. I urge ITN-BUET to provide scientific research on this issue. Additionally, collaborative efforts must be leveraged to scale up these solutions.

Due to the vulnerability and mobility of LIC dwellers, many initiatives fail to reach their full potential. Influential platforms like The Daily Star can play a crucial role by highlighting and disseminating stories of successful WASH models. Like stories of a village boy excelling in cricket inspire people, similar narratives about effective WASH models in LICs could create a widespread impact. Social media and e-papers offer tremendous potential to amplify these stories.

Shireen Pervin Huq
Chief, Women's Affairs Reform Commission



The WASH programme must extend beyond urban centres to suburban areas. In cities like Dhaka, RAJUK should mandate that public buildings make their toilet facilities accessible to everyone. Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital, a non-profit institution, provides toilet facilities for nearby traffic police on its first floor. Under its management, the hospital built two public toilets, setting an example for profit-driven hospitals, particularly in Dhammachi and other urban centres. These institutions should be required to adopt similar gender-inclusive WASH initiatives to benefit urban communities.

Beyond sanitation, access to clean water must also be a priority. In Gulshan, I observed a household placing jars and mugs outside their home for rickshaw pullers and passersby to drink from—a simple yet impactful initiative that should be replicated in other areas.

City Corporations and other authorities, especially RAJUK and WASA, must adopt a practical, results-driven approach to urban planning and WASH solutions. These authorities must make commitments and ensure these commitments translate into tangible initiatives, directly improving the living conditions of residents, particularly in underserved communities.

Tanjim Ferdous
In-Charge, NGO & Foreign Missions,
Business Development Team,
The Daily Star (Moderator)



Despite progress, women and marginalised groups face barriers. Gender-sensitive WASH solutions improve health, dignity, and economic opportunities, requiring collaboration, innovation, and strong policies to ensure inclusive, accessible, and sustainable services for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement gender sensitive and inclusive WASH programmes with genuine political commitment by integrating sanitation into national policies and practices.

Enforce mandatory public access to sanitation facilities in all public buildings, hospitals, markets and other spaces, ensuring they provide and manage well-maintained, accessible toilets for everyone.

Implement gender-sensitive infrastructure, including separate, safe and well-maintained toilets in public spaces, to ensure women's safety and health security in sanitation facilities.

Scale up successful inclusive WASH models from Dhaka to all LIC areas, adapting them to local needs for broader accessibility and impact.

Enact necessary policy and legal reforms to establish WASH as a fundamental right and hold authorities accountable for its provision and accessibility.

Ensure sanitation for marginalised communities by addressing the needs of disabled individuals, indigenous communities and transgender people in WASH planning and infrastructure.

Prioritise affordability and utilise digital collaboration to enhance WASH access and service efficiency. Invest in space-efficient innovations like basement toilets to address congestion in urban areas.

Scale up successful inclusive WASH models from Dhaka to all LIC areas, adapting them to local needs for broader accessibility and impact.

Enact necessary policy and legal reforms to establish WASH as a fundamental right and hold authorities accountable for its provision and accessibility.

NEWS

79 rivers dead or on deathbed

FROM PAGE 16
The study further states that as dams and water diversions upstream have altered the natural flow of rivers, millions of Bangladeshis are finding it increasingly difficult to fish, farm, and transport goods. Furthermore, as the availability of water in these rivers have become unpredictable, livelihoods are at risk, while entire communities dependent on them are struggling to survive.

Apart from people, wildlife in these regions is also being affected due to habitat destruction, which is disrupting the balance of nature, the study noted.

With regard to saving the dying rivers or reviving the dead ones, the report states, "We need to take better care by reducing pollution, preventing erosion, and restoring ecosystems. But Bangladesh cannot solve this problem alone. Since these rivers flow through multiple countries, cooperation with upstream neighbours is essential."

Azaz, who is also chairman of DRDC and administrator of Dhaka North City Corporation, said, "The government must pay immediate attention to these rivers and promote water transportation. If we do not use water transportation in all navigable rivers, we will not be able to save them." Using river transportation will require regular dredging, which will in turn help maintain navigability.

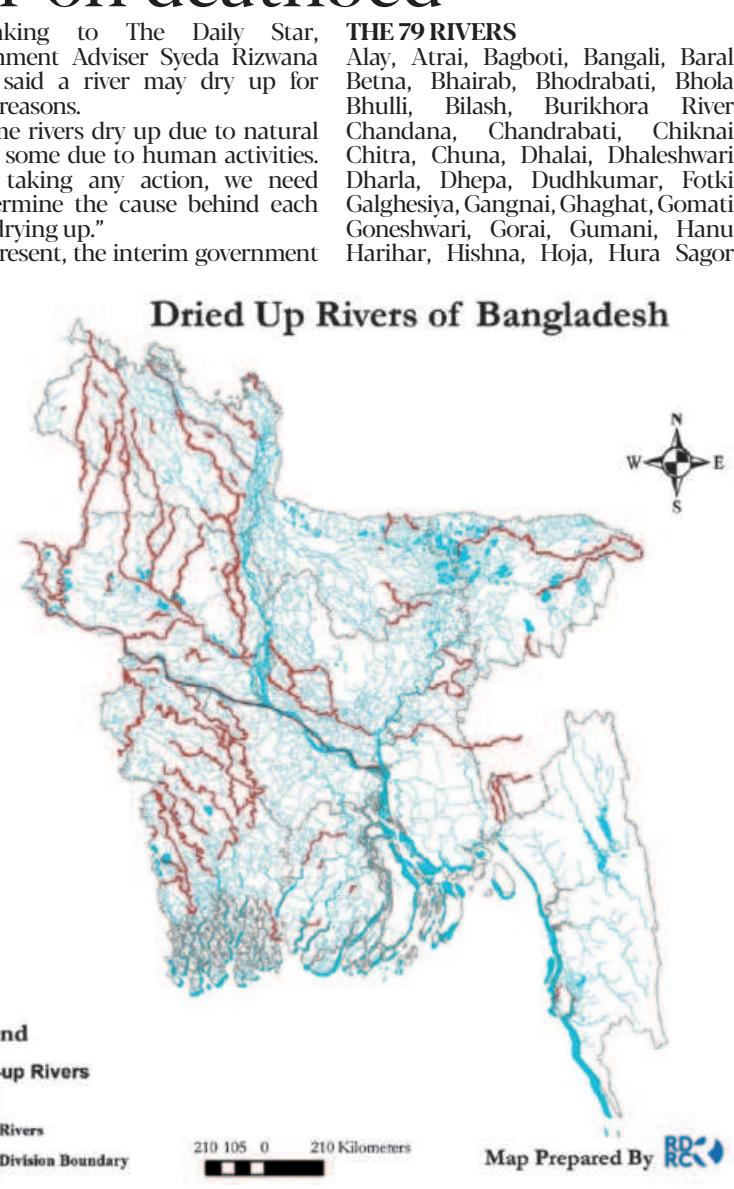
According to the study, waterways are the most economical means of transportation, as rivers and canals make up 24,000km of the country.

Using roadways costs Tk 2.81-3.51 per tonne per km, railways Tk 1.96 per tonne per km, while waterways cost only Tk 1.12 per tonne per km.

During the monsoon, approximately 6,000km of these waterways are navigable, while this reduces to around 3,800km in the dry season.

The Bangladesh Inland Waterway Transport Authorities should launch more riverine routes and encourage people to use them, the study suggested.

The previous government had introduced a master plan to excavate 53 inland waterways. The first phase aimed to restore 10,000km of 24 waterways by 2025. However, even after excavation, many waterways remained abandoned due to a lack of proper dredging and silt removal.



is focusing on reviving selected rivers—four in the capital and one in each division, she added.

Earlier, on 13 February 2012, former water resources minister Ramesh Chandra Sen told Parliament that about one-third of the country's rivers were almost dead. In response to lawmakers' queries in Parliament, he said 97 rivers were drying up. He also stated that 212 rivers remained navigable.

970 killed in Gaza in 48 hours

FROM PAGE 1
months of war that has reduced the enclave to rubble and forced most of its population to evacuate multiple times.

A Hamas official said the group was open to talks on getting the ceasefire back on track but rejected Israeli demands to renegotiate the three-stage deal agreed with Egyptian, Qatari and US mediators.

"Hamas has not closed the door on negotiations but we insist there is no need for new agreements," Taher al-Nunu told AFP.

"We have no conditions, but we demand that the occupation be compelled to immediately halt its aggression and war of extermination, and begin the second phase of negotiations."

The renewed bloodshed followed one of the deadliest days so far in the Israeli assault on the Palestinian territory with Israeli airstrikes killing more than 430 people on Tuesday, according to Palestinian health authorities.

Negotiations have stalled over how to proceed with a ceasefire whose first phase expired in early March, with Israel and Hamas disagreeing on whether to move to a new phase intended to bring the war to an end.

Israel and the United States have sought to change the terms of the deal by extending stage one.

That would delay the start of phase two, which was meant to establish a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and was swiftly rejected by Hamas, which demanded full implementation of the original deal.

Israel and the US have portrayed Hamas's rejection of an extended stage

one as a refusal to release more Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

Netanyahu's office said he ordered the renewed strikes on Gaza after "Hamas's repeated refusal to release our hostages".

In a televised address late Tuesday, the premier said, "Hamas has already felt the strength of our arm in the past 24 hours. And I want to promise you -- and them -- this is only the beginning."

The White House said Israel consulted US President Donald Trump's administration before launching the strikes.

The intense Israeli bombardment sent a stream of new casualties to the few hospitals still functioning in Gaza and triggered fears of a return to full blown war after two months of relative calm.

Two people, including a United Nations employee, were killed when a UN building in Deir el-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, was hit, according to a UN source.

Jorge Moreira da Silva, executive director of the UN office for Project Services, said: "Israel knew that this was a UN premises, that people were living, staying and working there, it is a compound. It is a very well-known place.

An explosive device was dropped or fired on the premises, he told a press conference in Brussels.

"This was not an accident," he said. "What's happening in Gaza is unconscionable."

However, the Israeli military denied that it struck the UN facility.

DAHKA JOINS GLOBAL CALL FOR PEACE

Bangladesh yesterday joined governments in the Middle East, Europe and beyond and called for the renewed hostilities to end.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement expressed, its "strongest condemnation and profound concerns" over the resumption of Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip.

It said the renewed cycle of violence represents a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and a grievous disregard for established ceasefire agreements.

"Bangladesh unequivocally denounces the Israeli occupation forces' continued indiscriminate airstrikes on densely populated civilian areas," it said, urging Israel to immediately cease all military operations.

Bangladesh further called upon the international community, particularly the United Nations, to take urgent and decisive measures to ensure the cessation of hostilities, protect civilian lives, and facilitate the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to the besieged people of Gaza.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Israel's raids on Gaza "are shattering the tangible hopes of so many Israelis and Palestinians of an end to suffering on all sides".

European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said she told her Israeli counterpart Gideon Saar that the new strikes on Gaza were "unacceptable".

Both Egypt and Qatar, which brokered the Gaza ceasefire alongside the United States, condemned Israel's resort to military action.

Tulip slams 'false' graft allegations

FROM PAGE 2
In his investigation into the allegations, Sir Laurie Magnus said that "over an extended period, she was unaware of the origins of her ownership of her flat in Kings Cross, despite having signed a Land Registry transfer form relating to the gift at the time".

She "remained under the impression that her parents had bought the property for her", Sir Laurie added, but had to correct the record when she became a government minister.

He describes this as an "unfortunate misunderstanding" which meant the public had been "inadvertently misled about the identity of the donor of this gift".

In their letter to the ACC, Tulip's lawyers confirm that the King's Cross flat was given to her by Abdul Motalif, who is described as "an iman and a very close family friend, akin to Ms [Tulip] Siddiq's godfather".

The letter also contains a detailed rebuttal of allegations made by the ACC to the media that Tulip was involved in the appropriation of land in Dhaka.

It describes ACC briefings to the media as an "unacceptable attempt to interfere with UK politics".

"At no point have any allegations been put to her fairly, properly and transparently, or indeed at all, by the ACC or anyone else with proper authority on behalf of the Bangladeshi government,"

the letter says.

"We require that you immediately stop manufacturing false and vexatious allegations against Ms [Tulip] Siddiq and further media briefings and public comments designed to harm her reputation."

The letter says the ACC must put questions to Siddiq "promptly" and "in any event by no later than 25 March 2025" or "we shall presume that there are no legitimate questions to answer".

The ACC's chairman, Mohammad Abdul Momen, told The Times: "All allegations raised against Ms Siddiq will be proven in any court, including the ones in the United Kingdom."