

Sanitation and hygiene research in Bangladesh



SHARE aims to accelerate progress on sanitation and hygiene in developing countries by generating rigorous and relevant research, and ensuring new and existing solutions are adopted at scale. The consortium is represented in Bangladesh – one of SHARE’s four focus countries – by the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B), and WaterAid Bangladesh.

SHARE research underway in Bangladesh focuses primarily on health and urban sanitation – two of SHARE’s research pillars. These are both major and interconnected concerns in one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Frequent flooding in low-lying Bangladesh, which is home to more than 150 million people and one of the most densely populated countries in the world, increases the problems and health risks associated with poor sanitation. Despite considerable progress in increasing sanitation coverage and usage in rural areas, the situation in urban areas has declined in recent decades according to the UN’s Millennium Development Goals Indicators, largely as a result of rapid urbanisation. SHARE’s more general research activities, including international meetings and global studies, are also relevant because of Bangladesh’s size and the severity of its sanitation and hygiene challenges. The activities listed below under SHARE’s four research pillars are all relevant to Bangladesh:

Health

- One of SHARE’s first projects is an investigation into whether hygiene promotion is effective in reducing weaning food contamination. Based on a recent ground-breaking intervention study of weaning food hygiene in Mali, the research in Bangladesh involves field workers visiting households over a four-week period to advise mothers about handwashing with soap and food hygiene. The findings will have implications for the reduction of morbidity and mortality associated with weaning food-related diarrhoea.
- Research is underway to identify the risk factors for the contamination of tube-wells in Bangladesh. This project draws upon a pilot study that showed that the contamination of ground water in Bangladesh may be related to the location of pit latrines. Objectives include developing a predictive model for the contamination of tube-wells based on the weight of risk factors.
- A systematic review of the impact of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions upon the nutritional status of children is being carried out at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. This work will help inform better policy on nutrition, health and WASH.

Sanitation markets

- Research is underway across a range of countries to investigate how microfinance can be used effectively to increase financing for sanitation facilities and services.

Urban sanitation

- Researchers are investigating the faecal contamination of commuters' hands in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka to assess whether these levels are any different with regard to the seasons, knowledge and practice of hygiene, socioeconomic status, and/or type of transportation used (train, bus, boat, aeroplane). Commuters will be asked questions and to rinse their hands. A sample of the water after rinsing will be analysed in the laboratory to ascertain faecal contamination.
- SHARE is organising a roundtable meeting in London to discuss the data available for monitoring access to sanitation in slums with the intention of developing methods to make them more reliable. Discussions will also explore ways in which this data can be better used to inform investments at the national and city levels.

Equity

- In November 2010 researchers, policy-makers and practitioners met to discuss the neglected issue of menstrual hygiene management. Critical gaps in knowledge were identified, including the lack of guidance about what works in different contexts.
- In March 2011, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners met to share knowledge and identify research needs for people with disabilities to access sanitation and hygiene services.

SHARE PhD fellowship

- In the autumn of 2011, Tarique Huda, supervised by SHARE's Dr Jeroen Ensink, will begin studies at LSHTM to research the health impacts associated with the sanitation ladder in Bangladesh.

More information about SHARE

SHARE (Sanitation and Hygiene Applied Research for Equity) is a five-year initiative (2010-2015) funded by the UK's Department for International Development. The consortium includes the following partners:

- **International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh**
- **International Institute for Environment and Development**
- **London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine**
- **Shack/Slum Dwellers International**
- **WaterAid**

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