

Kakoli Mondal's – A story of change

In Bangladesh more than 90% women and girls are collecting water for their daily household consumption with respect to men and boy. In coastal areas southwestern part of Bangladesh, it is a tough job where fresh drinking water is not available round the year and contaminated with arsenic and salinity. Kakoli Mondal is one of them who is a 32-year mother living in Puijala village of Sreeula union in Assasuni upazila under Satkhira district. Kakoli Mondal was married to Mr. Kazi Biplob Mondal when she was at 10th grade. Now she is having six members in her family (husband, 2 daughters, mother-in-law and father-in-law) her and female members of this family are working hard for fetching safe drinking water from multiple water sources and it is a ongoing process for the last eight years. Their economical status is not that good to have their own water options on their premises.

Source of drinking water

They are living in a complex area in the context of fresh drinking water and the safe water sources are not available. There are no safe deep tubewells or safe water options within 3 km from her house. They have installed a very shallow tubewell by their own financial capacity which is contaminated with arsenic and salinity. During the wet season the road gets muddy or flooded and it is very difficult to collect drinking water from different sources. As a result, sometimes they are consuming contaminated water for drinking and cooking purpose.

Some private entrepreneurs are selling water from RO plant in rural level by 25 Taka for 40 liters. Unfortunately, Kakoli could not afford to buy drinking water from the truck regularly with this amount and also she could not afford to buy a big tank where she can preserve water from rainy season.

New invention for preserving rain water

Kakoli Mondal was collecting rain water for drinking purposes in the past few years in big sized plastic packets. She sealed those bags carefully and attached with a bamboo and preserved in the shade for the rest of the year. She can maintain the demand of her family with this preserved water for more than half of year. But the most concerning issues is water quality and she is worried about this unprotected preservation technique. When this storage become ended then she sometimes purchases water from the truck or collect water from the distant (>3 km) deep tubewell for rest of the months. However, she is proud that she can collect her own drinking water and provide safe water to the family. Sometimes, she even provides drinking water to neighbors, when emergencies occur.

Safe Water point allocation

GoB-UNICEF conducted an evidenced based approach named “Arsenic Safe Union” funded by Embassy of Sweden and implemented by DPHE-UNICEF with the support of EPRC in Assasuni from 2019 to provide safe water for all mostly targeting poor and vulnerable community. Baseline and CSA was conducted under this program to assess socio-economic condition of community people along with WASH situation in the interventions area. During these survey community level social maps was prepared to identify the each and every household for targeting poor and vulnerable and necessity of safe drinking water. This analysis optimized the site selection process and came up with a list of beneficiaries who did not have any safe water access. Along with this hardware allocation a detail awareness program were conducted in community level which includes-



Photo: Muddy Road on the way to the deep tube well



Photo: Kakoli and the rainwater stored in plastic bags

orientation on WASH, arsenic awareness program, Water safety planning for users, motivation on improve sanitation and hygiene through CLTS approach. Environment and Population Research Centre (EPRC), a Bangladeshi NGO, has been conducting workshops and courtyard sessions to educate communities about the importance of sanitation and the risks of drinking contaminated water.

Kakoli Mondal attended those sessions and learned about the importance of safe water consumption and urgency of improve sanitation with hygiene practice.

After getting that awareness and session Kakoli Mondal applied for safe water options for her community through LGIs. Selection authority reviewed baseline and CSA results and selected this community. Technical review committee assessed feasibility assessment (a scientific approach for targeting safe aquifer depth in the context of arsenic and salinity) results and allocated safe water options to that targeted communities with a assessed safe water source (in that case DTW). After installation water quality has been tested in DPHE lab which again validated during 3rd party monitoring in ICDDR'B lab. After having all results these options handed over to community with a proper caretaker training and required maintenance tools. Training on water safety planning was conducted for users specially who are collecting water from source and transporting it to consumption point. Now Kakoli Mondal is a trained woman who can deals with WSAH issues and is having safe water from that tubewell and living a healthy life.



Photo: Kakoli Mondal is collecting water from allocated safe water option under GoB-UNICEF project