

Community-Led Initiative to Restore Pond Sand Filter (PSF) for Safe Drinking Water Access in Village Paikgacha, Khulna District

The Struggle for Safe Drinking Water

Water is life. Without it, survival is impossible. In village Paikgacha under Soladana Union access to safe drinking water has long been a critical issue. Communities face a daily struggle for clean and safe drinking water. Groundwater sources are contaminated with arsenic and salt, and surface water is often saline. A previously installed Pond Sand Filter (PSF) in the local mosque compound had served as a vital water source for nearly 200 families but had been non-functional for over eight months due to poor maintenance and lack of ownership.

The Turning Point

Recognizing the urgency, EPRC under the GoB-Unicef project, engaged with the local community to find a sustainable solution. EPRC had begun work in the Paikgacha area to address arsenic contamination and increase access to safe water. But a major challenge loomed: a non-functional PSF in Village Paikgacha—the only source of safe water for hundreds of people. Through dialogue, it was revealed that while the PSF was essential, no group had taken responsibility for its upkeep. The system had failed due to a combination of theft, lack of maintenance, and absence of ownership. Yet the project believed in the power of community-led solutions.



The Community Steps Up

Project staff engaged villagers in a series of discussions to the situation. More than a technical repair, the situation required restoring community ownership. The PSF was located in a pond within the compound of Shahi Jame Masjid, a local mosque. The pond also served people performing ablution (wudu) and madrassa students who lived nearby. The community recognized that restoring the PSF would benefit not only families but also religious and educational institutions. The villagers approached the mosque committee. Under the leadership of Mr. Mostafizur Rahman, a retired army officer and the mosque's general secretary, the committee convened to find a solution.



A Collaborative Solution

The mosque committee made a bold and compassionate decision: to fund the restoration of the PSF from the mosque's financial reserve. Recognizing the system's importance to the broader community, they took ownership of the initiative. With the committee's support, the villagers mobilized. They pooled resources, purchased new filter covers, a tube well, a lock, and other necessary materials. Repairs were completed swiftly, and the PSF was restored to working condition.

The Impact: A New Lease on Life

The restored PSF became a lifeline for approximately 1,050 people—about 200 families—who now have reliable access to safe drinking water. For women, who typically bear the burden of collecting water, the change was transformative. No longer did they need to walk long distances or rely on costly Jar water. For men, the financial relief was immediate—money once spent on water could now go toward food, education, and other necessities.

The mosque committee members also expressed pride in their role. Their decision not only solved a critical problem but also strengthened their bond with the community.



A Lasting Legacy

This initiative is more than a restoration—it is a model for sustainable, community-driven development. It shows that with the right blend of leadership, participation, and modest investment, communities can resolve even their most entrenched problems. Mosque committees appreciate the project guidance and leadership growth, Village Paikgacha now has safe, accessible drinking water. More importantly, the community now owns the solution and is committed to maintaining it.

Conclusion: A Community's Triumph

The story of Village Paikgacha is one of perseverance, unity, and transformation. It demonstrates that when communities take initiative, change is not only possible—it is lasting. Through collective action, 1,050 people now enjoy safe water and relief from the financial burden of purchasing it. This initiative stands as a model of community-led, sustainable development. It showcases the power of local leadership, collective responsibility, and the importance of involving communities in solving their own challenges.