

A Community's Shifted to Safe Drinking Water – The Story of Pach Bhola Village in Gogha Union

For years, peoples of, Jessore Pach Bhola village of Gogha Union in Sharsa Upazila, an inaudible crisis persisted for generations. Residents of Gogha Union, like many across rural Bangladesh, depended on hand-pumped tube wells—unaware that the water they consumed every day was contaminated with arsenic. This invisible threat caused severe health problems, drained family resources, and consumed valuable time. Despite the hardship, the community held onto hope: the hope for safe drinking water.

A Daily Struggle for Survival

For the people of Gogha Union, water—a source of life—had become a source of disease. Chronic exposure to arsenic from contaminated tube wells led to widespread health issues, including skin lesions, gastrointestinal disorders, and long-term illnesses. Parents feared for their children's future, knowing that even a basic need like drinking water came with a risk.

With limited access to alternatives, many families resorted to walking several kilometers each day to collect safe drinking water, often at a significant financial and physical cost. Others had no choice but to continue consuming the tainted water, aware of the danger but left with no viable options. The situation demanded urgent action.



A Partnership Intervention for Change

To address the drinking water crises, EPRC under GoB-Unicef project joined forces with the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED). The goal was ambitious yet vital: to provide Pach Bhola village with a sustainable, long-term solution to arsenic safe drinking water. At the heart of the initiative was the construction of a community-based water treatment plant support by JICA, designed to purify local water sources and deliver arsenic-free drinking water. The treatment facility was built and connected to local distribution points for easy access.

GoB-Unicef project staff led the charge by initiating dialogue with local government representatives, including Union Parishad Chairman Mr. Mohammad Tabibur Rahman, and engaged community members to ensure the solution would be accepted, maintained, and valued. The initiative involved local leaders and residents from the start to confirming that no one in the community would have to suffer from unsafe drinking water again and ensure the ownership and sustainability.



The success of the project was driven by collaboration at every level:

- Technical experts ensured water safety and plant efficiency.
- Community leaders mobilized residents and facilitated ongoing communication.
- Union Parishad members coordinated resources and helped overcome logistical challenges.
- Local residents contributed time, effort, and insight to support the water point's long-term sustainability.

Community Voices: Real Stories, Real Change

The impact of the water treatment plant quickly became apparent—not just in improved health, but in restored dignity and opportunity. Community members shared their experiences:



Amina Khatun, mother of three child: *“Every day, I used to walk nearly more than an hour to fetch water. Now, I can focus on my children’s education and household work without that burden.”*

Rahima Begum, school teacher: *“Our students used to miss school often due to waterborne diseases or girl’s collecting drinking water from far. But since we got access to safe water within our village, their attendance has improved significantly.”*

Sujan Ali, local farmer: *“Before this project, my family and I suffered from stomach issues due to unsafe water. Now, we no longer worry about falling sick. It’s a huge relief!”*

Mr. Mohammad Tabibur Rahman, Union Chairman: *“This initiative has brought hope to our people. Safe water is a basic right, and finally, our community has it.”*

Transforming Lives

The installation of the water treatment plant has strongly improved the lives of more than hundreds of families in Pach Bhola village. Significant reduction waterborne illnesses and improved physical well-being, especially among children and the elderly. Also, families no longer spend money or time traveling for safe drinking water. The residents have more time for education, farming, and income-generating activities.

The initiative of GoB-Unicef project strengthened community resilience and it has become a source of pride and unity. The local leaders and residents are empowered to address future challenges collectively. Neighboring villages of Goga Union have shown interest in replicating the initiative.

Union Chairman, Union member and community leaders, have expressed deep gratitude for the project initiative, seeing it as a turning point in the fight for safe water. Community leaders feel more confident in addressing local issues through collective action. The people of Goga Union now drink safely, live healthfully, and dream more boldly. This case study serves as a testament to what is possible when communities, governments, and organizations unite in pursuit of a common goal: safe water for all.

