

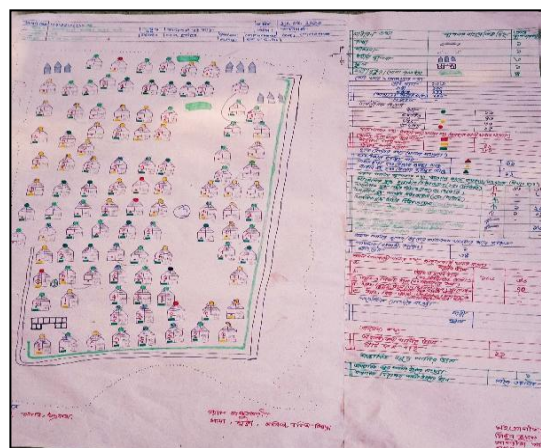
## Community participation to ensure equity-based site selection for safe water rights

### Background

Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) is the nation building department of the Bangladesh government responsible to ensure provision of safe drinking water supply and sanitation for all citizens. But they have resource gap and limitations in ensuring local community participation directly in effective and long-term planning and implementation. GOB-UNICEF 'Strengthening Community Capacity and Arsenic Mitigation Initiatives to Ensure Drinking Water Safety for All' Project has started in October 2022 in vulnerable Sadar upazila of Gopalganj district, the EPRC organization has been commissioned to implement the project at the field level. In Gopalganj Sadar Upazila safe water is still highly scarce due to severely arsenic affected, salinity intruded and a hydro-geologically challenging where there is microbial threat as well. Approximately 73% of the population faced Arsenic and other contamination problems in drinking water and about 25% poor and 15% hardcore poor families are living in the project area. In-addition, the equitable distribution and sustainable WASH services are very low in the project areas. In this context project assist to DPHE targeting to pro-poor and un-served community and considering equity-based site selection for additional safe water points to fill the gap of 100% safe water coverage by direct community participation and social resource mapping.



Pic- SE, DPHE, Faridpur circle observed CSA and social mapping session in Bedgram village, Gopalganj



Pic-Community has drawn a social map with existing WASH status and location of safe WPs needs

### Community engagement in equity-based site selection process

To create safe water accessibility and to reduce the scarcity of safe water by identifying of unserved and underserved areas/locations and sites, selection of appropriate technologies for safe drinking water. At the beginning of the project, formed community cluster and cluster-based community-based organization (CBO) in each village to raise the voice and demand creation. Organized community situation analysis through social & resource mapping and priority was given to community's participation and their knowledge/experiences in community situation Analysis (CSA) and in social resource mapping. Mr. Badsha Mia, Superintendent Engineer, Faridpur circle and AE, Gopalganj DPHE, WASH Officer UNICEF were physically observed the triggering session, social mapping and water point

feasibility assessment (WASH CSA) at field level and to observed communities' active participation of decision making for equity-based site selection towards safe drinking water points. He amazingly noticed that without any biasness, partiality and pressure how the community spontaneously reached to consensus for selecting the sites and draw in the social map by themselves in these political sensitive areas. He highly appreciated this approach and labeled it as the sustainable way of site selection and recommended local DPHE to make the implementation plan in this way on the way forward. He also appreciated EPRC for their active role in engagement of community in equity-based site selection.

**Heard voices of community and government support**

DPHE Superintendent Engineer asked Executive Engineer to support this process and to allocate resources for these actual needy areas. Also he pleased and appreciated the process and requested EPRC project team to provide unserved and underserved areas list. EE DPHE involved AE DPHE and took the site list from the facilitating NGO EPRC to provide support by installation of ongoing safe water points (RWH & AIRU) by DPHE. Based on CSA and social mapping EPRC project field team finalized sites for 1,022 RWH and 341 other water options list and submitted to AE, DPHE Gopalganj to fill up the gap of 100% safe water coverage in project Unions. Among them DPHE has started installation work of 139 arsenic safe water points (AIRP & RWH) and endorsed to install 323 HHs rainwater harvesting system prioritizing project submitted equity-based site selection list. After completion of installation of these 139 arsenic safe water options 2850 nos of people will gained access to safe water options and will be benefited. Project team also provides support to DPHE for community mobilization, caretaker training for installed water points & water safety planning and hygiene promotion following the arsenic safe union concept.



Pic: Handover and discussion preferred equity-based water point site list to AE, DPHE Gopalganj



Pic- AIRU installation by DPHE at Khagail village in Horidaspur Union

Executive Engineer, Assistant Engineer of DPHE Gopalganj expressed their full satisfaction and opined that this project has been integrated timely with other existing government arsenic mitigation water supply project/activities and undertaking this innovative technique benefited large number of populations without additional costs of government. They also requested to provide similar support in other Unions where this project is not implementing.