

Pallabi Slum, Bangladesh

The urban slum projects of Demra Slum, Kamrangir Char Slum and Pallabi Slum are very similar.

Conditions

Pallabi Slum is an overpopulated squatter community. The people living in Pallabi are mostly landless, having migrated from more rural areas in the country. Living conditions are extremely difficult with families of 5 or 6 people often living in single-room shack.

Children of Pallabi frequently suffer from diarrheal diseases. There are some hanging latrines in the slum which, although they give minimal privacy, allow excreta to drop into ditches or water sources creating open cesspools. When hanging latrines are not available, open defecation is practiced. Water resources are severely limited. Residents retrieve water from illegal connections to the city's water supply, often paying up to 10 times the price of the water sold to legal connections. Other community members obtain all their drinking water from construction sites, mosques, or from contaminated drainage ditches.

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Our project in Pallabi has been divided into three phases. The first two phases are complete and have been tremendously successful. Phase III will expand our water and sanitation efforts to people in several other neighborhoods in Pallabi Slum. Having seen the success of Phases I and II, the communities involved in Phase III are willing to pay for a portion of the capital costs and 100% of the maintenance costs for their new water system.

Old water source

Dhaka's water and sewage systems are run by the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (DWASA). However, DWASA will not provide water to the people living in these slums because they live outside its service area. Instead, community members accessed the water they need for survival through a patchwork of sources, none of which are guaranteed or safe. There were some hand pumps on wells, but these largely went out of service in the dry season when the water table drops. When these sources were unavailable, community members were reduced to scavenging for water, relying on mosques or schools and many had to resort to ditches and rivers to meet their water needs. Not only were the sources unreliable throughout the year, they also carried the risk of illness from pathogens and, for the ground water sources, arsenic poisoning.

New Water Source

Our local partner organization bridged the gap between these squatter communities and DWASA, allowing the communities to purchase water in bulk from DWASA at wholesale prices. Water is piped to underground reservoirs via the DWASA water mains. From these reservoirs it is pumped to elevated storage tanks and then distributed

Phase I Completed in 2004 Phase II Completed in 2005



Sanitation in unimproved areas of Pallabi Slumis is horrendous with the use of "hanging latrines." The human waste simply drops on the ground below the latrine and accumulated until it is washed away.



A bicycle rickshaw carries packaged water into the slum to sell. 0.5 liter costs T3 (\$0.05).



A new Pallabi Slum water point constructed under the WPI project.

to water points throughout the slums. People are able to walk shorter distances (less than 500 meters) to collect their water. Some areas that were not easily reached by the piped system are served by deep wells with hand pumps. The groundwater was tested to make sure it is free of arsenic. Caretakers will monitor the water points to serve those who collect water and ensure proper maintenance.

Impact on the Community

Providing water security has allowed the Phase I and II populations to pursue wider economic development. Because of reduced illness and time spent scavenging for water, adults are pursuing additional work and children are spending more time in school.

Project Highlights

Our partner organization provided hygiene and sanitation practices training to community members and helped facilitate a relationship with DWASA.

Because women are disproportionately impacted by water insecurity and usually have primary responsibility for family health, special emphasis was given to engaging women on the water committees.

Two types of latrines were constructed as part of the project. Cluster latrines that can serve up to 250 people and individual household latrines for those that wished to have private latrines.

The cluster latrines are served by septic tanks and have several private stalls to accommodate both adults and children. A caretaker oversees the operation and maintenance of the latrines and also ensures that they are kept clean.

The households which opted for private latrines were eligible for loans to purchase the materials needed to construct basic pit latrines. The loans, which total about US \$30 each, will be paid back over the course of 50 weeks.



Community Based Organization (CBO) meeting for hygiene training in Pallabi Slum.



Community Health Worker leads members of the CBO in a discussion of healthy vs. unhealthy hygiene practices. CNB Slum (part of Pallabi Slum Project).



Pallabi Slum school.



New WaterPartners latrines in Pallabi Slum.