



# National Policy for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (NP-WASH) 2025

**Local Government Division**

**Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives**  
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## Working Definitions

**Acceptability:** It refers to the extent to which water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructures, facilities, services, and behaviours are perceived by users as culturally appropriate, socially agreeable, respectful of religious norms, and functionally suitable - ensuring dignity, safety, convenience, and sustained use by all community members.

**Accessibility:** It is the physical and geographical ease with which individuals or communities can access and utilise water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. This means services should be located close to where people live or work, ensuring there are no significant barriers, such as distance, physical obstacles, or inadequate infrastructure.

**Affordability:** It refers to the financial accessibility of WASH services. It ensures that the cost of accessing and using WASH services does not impose an undue financial burden on individuals or communities. It is essential that WASH services remain within the financial capacity of the people they serve. As a benchmark, the cost should ideally not exceed 1.5% of the median household income for water supply and 2% for sanitation services.

**Availability:** The presence of sufficient and reliable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services to meet the needs of individuals and communities. It means that these services are consistently and readily accessible when required.

**Basic Service Level for Hygiene:** The basic minimum service level for hygiene is handwashing with soap and water that is available at households and public settings.

**Basic Service Level for Sanitation:** It means that every household has a separate improved latrine and everyone has access to hygienic and well-maintained toilets in public places and institutions. Hygienically maintained community latrines or shared latrines will be considered in communities with space constraints, such as slums, low-income communities, and hard-to-reach areas.

**Basic Service Level for Water Supply:** This means that each household or cluster of households has year-round access to a water connection or water point within a reasonable distance (50 meters) from their dwellings, supplying the basic minimum quantity of safe water of 50 litres per capita per day (lpcd) for domestic uses. This meets the national water quality standard and is available within 20 minutes round-trip, including queuing time.

**Blended Finance:** It refers to a finance mechanism that strategically combines public funds, philanthropic capital (e.g., grants), or concessional finance (e.g., loans) with private investment to mobilise capital for underserved sectors (e.g., WASH). By mitigating risks (through guarantees etc.) and aligning financial returns with social outcomes, it bridges funding gaps while advancing both development goals and investor objectives.

**Circular Economy:** It refers to a restorative and regenerative system that reimagines resource use through principles such as rethinking design, reducing waste, reusing materials, repairing products, refurbishing for renewed utility, and recycling at end-of-life. It maintains materials in continuous cycles through closed-loop processes, minimising environmental loss while maximising value creation.

**Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS):** It refers to a comprehensive approach to urban sanitation that prioritises the needs and rights of all city residents—including slum dwellers and vulnerable people. The approach aims to deliver safe, accessible, and sustainable sanitation services while advancing public health, climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

**Climate Adaptation:** It refers to adjustments in ecological, social or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects. It refers to changes in processes, practices and structures to moderate potential damages or benefit from climate change opportunities.

**Climate-Resilient:** It is defined as the ability of a system, community, or society exposed to climate hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to, and recover from the effects of a hazard. It is an integrated approach that combines climate adaptation and mitigation with sustainable development to enhance the capacity of human and natural systems to withstand and recover from climate impacts.

**Climate-Justice:** It refers to equitable access to resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructures, facilities, services, for climate-vulnerable populations to address historical inequities through participatory governance and fair processes in planning, design, and implementation.

**Community Latrine:** It refers to one or more safely managed latrines placed within a community cluster for shared use by a specific section of the community.

**Cost Sharing:** It is the portion of the total cost that is contributed by the user group for a WASH system, where applicable, during the construction and/or operation and maintenance phases of the system.

**Disaster-Responsive:** It means actively addressing both immediate disaster impacts and long-term risks by considering hazards, vulnerable populations, and community capabilities in all actions and programmes.

**Drinking Water Ladder:** It refers to the tiered framework established by the UN Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) to benchmark and compare drinking water supply service levels across countries and will be employed to assess and compare water supply service levels under this policy in the country. The drinking water ladder categorises drinking water services based on progressively higher levels of service, from basic to safely managed.

**Drinking Water Quality Standard:** Bangladesh standards for drinking water quality are defined in the Environment Conservation Rules 2022 and its subsequent addendum. However, when the national standards do not specify a value for a water quality parameter, the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline values are considered applicable for that parameter.

**Drinking Water Services:** Drinking water services that provide an adequate quantity of water refers to the accessibility, availability, affordability, reliability, and quality of the main source of water used for drinking, cooking, personal hygiene, and other domestic uses.

**Extreme (Hardcore) Poor:** The members of households whose total expenditure on food and non-food items combined is equal to or less than the summation of the food poverty line (also termed as the lower poverty line).

**Faecal Sludge:** Faecal sludge is a mixture of solid and liquid waste that accumulates in the containment systems of on-site sanitation facilities (e.g., pit latrines, septic tanks). It consists primarily of human excreta, along with water, organic matter (e.g., toilet paper), inorganic materials (e.g., sand, grit), and other debris that may enter the system.

**Faecal Sludge Management:** It is a collective system or process encompassing the containment, collection, transportation, treatment (on-site or off-site), and safe disposal or reuse of faecal sludge. It ensures proper handling, safety, and environmental protection throughout all stages, from generation to final disposition.

**Formal Private Sector:** The formal private sector in WASH refers to businesses and organisations that operate within the country's legal and regulatory framework, including water suppliers, WASH product manufacturers, and service operators, who adhere to regulations, licensing requirements, and standards.

**Gender:** Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys. This includes the norms, behaviours, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy, as well as their relationships.

**Growth Centre:** It refers to a strategically designated rural or peri-urban area that serves as an economic and social development hub for its surrounding region. These centres are typically anchored around rural marketplaces and are equipped with essential infrastructure, commercial facilities, and administrative services to stimulate local economic activity. For the purpose of WASH infrastructure and service development, these shall be recognised as urban areas, acknowledging their peri-urban and rural–urban transitional characteristics, even though they are administratively classified as rural areas.

**Hand Washing Facilities:** It refers to fixed or mobile installation designed for hand hygiene. These may include sinks with tap water, buckets with taps, tippy-taps, and jugs or basins designated for handwashing. Soap includes bar soap, liquid soap, powder detergent, and soapy water but does not include ash, soil, sand, or other handwashing agents.

**Hand Washing Ladder:** It refers to the tiered framework established by the UN Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) to benchmark and compare hygiene service levels across countries. This framework categorises access to hand washing facilities into service tiers—such as basic (facility with soap and water), limited (facility lacking soap/water), and no facility—based on JMP standards. Under this policy, the ladder will guide assessments of hand washing service provision and inform targeted interventions.

**Hard-to-Reach Area:** Areas having poor water and sanitation coverage due to adverse hydro-geological condition, having poor and inadequate communication network, and frequent occurrence of natural calamities, which in turn results in higher rate of child mortality and accelerates the vicious cycle of poverty, are referred as hard-to-reach areas.

**Hygiene:** This refers to a set of practices or conditions that promote health and prevent the spread of illness or disease. This includes maintaining cleanliness, safe water handling, regular cleaning, and proper maintenance of WASH facilities and surrounding areas to reduce the risk of contamination and infection. Hygiene covers various aspects, including personal hygiene, menstrual hygiene, environmental hygiene, food hygiene, and more, all of which contribute to overall health and well-being.

**Hygiene Practices:** It refers to the activities aimed at increasing awareness, altering behaviours, and advocating practices that enhance hygiene standards and public health at individual and community levels. It considers educational campaigns, effective communication strategies, and community engagement to foster the adoption of hygienic behaviours such as safe water handling, toilet maintenance and cleanliness, sanitation practices, hand washing, menstrual hygiene, food safety, and environmental cleanliness.

**Improved Drinking Water Sources:** Improved drinking water sources are those which, by nature of their design and construction, have the potential to deliver safe water. These include treated piped water, boreholes or tube wells, protected dug wells, protected springs, rainwater harvesting systems, pond sand filters (PSF), arsenic and iron removal units (AIRU), reverse osmosis (RO) systems, and packaged or delivered water.

**Improved Sanitation Facilities:** Improved sanitation facilities are those designed to hygienically separate excreta from human contact, and include: flush/pour flush toilets connected to piped sewer systems, septic tanks or pit latrines; pit latrines with slabs (including ventilated pit latrines), and composting toilets.

**Informal Private Sector:** The informal private sector in WASH refers to small-scale, often unregulated activities and actors, such as local masons, manual pit emptiers, waste pickers, community plumbers, and small vendors, operating without formal registration, legal protection, or adherence to regulations.

**Institutional WASH:** It refers to WASH facilities in institutional settings including schools, healthcare facilities, and workplaces.

**Integrated Waste Management (IWM):** It refers to a holistic approach to waste handling that integrates strategies to reduce environmental harm, align with circular economy principles through resource lifespan extension, and ensure safe, sustainable disposal. It prioritises waste prevention, recycling, composting, energy recovery, and systems tailored to local conditions.

**Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM):** It refers to a process that promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources to equitably maximise economic and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems and the environment.

**Ministry:** The Local Government Division under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

**Optimal Service Level for Water:** It refers to year-round access for each household or cluster of households to a water connection or point within their dwelling or premises,

supplying at least 100 litres per capita per day (lpcd) of safe water that complies with national quality standards for all domestic uses. The design quantity may exceed this minimum to account for all technical losses, local conditions, and requirements, provided that the minimum of 100 lpcd is consistently supplied at the point of use.

**Poor:** The members of households whose per capita expenditure on food and non-food items combined is equal to or less than the summation of the food poverty line and non-food poverty line, also termed as the upper poverty line.

**Professional Service Providers:** Organisations which are characterised by their ability to operate at scale, technical competence, compliance with relevant policies and regulations, robust data verification systems, and commitment to delivering measurable results.

**Public Toilets:** Toilets that do not belong to a particular household; rather, the toilet is available for use by any member of the public, including but not limited to customers, travellers, employees of a business, students, and people with disabilities.

**Quality:** It means the national standard and safety of water, sanitation, and hygiene services aiming to prevent transmission of waterborne and other diseases.

**Reliability:** It refers to the consistent and uninterrupted provision of water, sanitation, and hygiene services that are not subject to frequent interruptions and function dependably over time.

**Results-Based Funding:** It is a sustainable financing approach to link payments for safe WASH services based on verified results of agreed performance metrics, which are reported on a quarterly basis to relevant stakeholders.

**Safe Water:** It refers to water that is safe from hazardous substances (micro-organisms, chemical substances, and radiological hazards) and that does not cause any significant risk to the users' health over lifetime consumption.

**Safely Managed Drinking Water:** It refers to drinking water from an improved source that is accessible on premises, available when needed, and free from faecal and priority chemical contamination.

**Safely Managed Sanitation:** It refers to the use of an improved sanitation facility that is not shared with other households and where excreta are safely disposed of in situ or transported and treated off-site.

**Sanitation:** It refers to the safe management of human excreta, wastewater, and solid waste to prevent contamination of the environment and water sources. It encompasses the collection, transportation, treatment, and disposal or reuse of these waste materials. Sanitation also includes the provision of facilities and infrastructure, such as toilets, sewage systems, septic tanks, drainage networks, landfills, and recycling facilities, to ensure public health and environmental sustainability.

**Sanitation Ladder:** it refers to the tiered framework used by the UN Joint Monitoring Programme to benchmark and compare sanitation service levels across countries, and will

be employed to assess and compare sanitation service levels under this policy. For this national policy document, the ladder will also include the additional rung of 'shared latrine'.

**Sanitation Services:** Sanitation services encompass the safe management of human excreta, faecal sludge, wastewater, and solid waste to prevent disease and promote health.

**School:** It refers to all educational institutions including formal, non-formal, general, and religious educational institutions.

**Sector:** It refers to the water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector, which will be called 'WASH' hereinafter.

**Self Supply:** It refers to WASH activities initiated and managed by individuals, households, or small groups using their own resources.

**Shared Latrine:** A latrine that is used by more than one household.

**Social entrepreneurs:** It refers to entrepreneurs who use innovative business solutions to address social, environmental, or community issues. They combine commercial activities with a strong commitment to upholding social safeguards and promoting the welfare of underserved or vulnerable populations. Their goal is to achieve sustainable, positive change by balancing social impact and financial sustainability.

**Solid Waste Management (SWM)<sup>1</sup>:** It is the systematic handling of solid waste, including its reduction, segregation, collection, recovery, recycling, control, transfer, transportation, processing, and disposal, in line with sound policies to safeguard public health and the environment.

**Sustainability in WASH:** This means ensuring that all water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, infrastructures, and behaviours are technically and financially viable, environmentally resilient, participatory and equitable, and institutionally robust. So they can function effectively, protect public health, and benefit both current and future generations without degrading the environment.

**Vulnerable People:** This refers to groups of people or individuals who face constrained access to basic services including water supply, sanitation, and hygiene due to unfavourable socioeconomic or physical characteristics. For instance, children, pregnant women, people living with disabilities, aged people, extremely poor, low-income urban communities living in slums and squatter settlements, tea garden workers, ethnic minority communities, people living in extreme hydro-geological conditions, climate-affected and climate-displaced people, and floating populations are among the vulnerable people.

**WASH at Public Places:** This refers to WASH facilities not designed for and not belonging to a particular household, but rather available for use by the general public, including but not limited to customers, travellers, employees of a business, students, and people with disabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Solid Waste Management Rules 2021 published by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

**WASH at Transportation Modes:** It refers to WASH facilities are available within a variety of transportation modes, including trains, aeroplanes, ships, and other forms of public or private conveyance.

**WASH Integrity:** It means applying principles of transparency, accountability, participation, and ethics in governance, management, and service delivery processes - ensuring equitable, efficient, trusted, and sustainable WASH systems for all while preventing abuses of power.

**Water Points:** Non-piped standalone drinking water sources such as handpump tube wells, power-driven tube wells, pond sand filters, dug wells, rainwater harvesting units, and similar other technologies, piped water supply outlets, for individual household, and public stand posts for common use.

**WASH Rights:** This refers to human rights to safe, affordable, and accessible water, sanitation, and hygiene for all, as recognised under UN resolutions. They require the elimination of disparities, ensuring accountability, and prioritising underserved and disadvantaged groups.

**Water Security:** It refers to the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of and acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socioeconomic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability.

**Water-Stressed Areas:** Areas that are declared so under the provision of Section 17 of the Bangladesh Water Act 2013 to protect water sources or aquifers.

**Water Supply System:** A water supply system encompasses the infrastructure and processes of abstraction, production, collection, storage, transmission, and distribution of water for domestic and commercial uses.

# Chapter One

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Achievements, Challenges, and the Need for Revision

Building on decades of resilience and innovation, Bangladesh a vibrant riverine nation born in 1971, has transformed challenges into opportunities, significantly improving public health and livelihoods. The country has made extraordinary strides in ensuring access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) for its people.

The National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (NWSSP) of 1998 played a pivotal role in guiding this progress. The country successfully met the MDG target for water supply. According to the UNICEF-WHO report<sup>2</sup>, access to improved water sources rose from 68% in 1990 to 87% in 2015. While the MDG sanitation target was not fully achieved, significant improvements were made, with access to improved sanitation increasing from 34% in 1990 to 61% in 2015. When shared latrines are included, coverage in 2015 rose to 89%. However, open defecation dropped dramatically from 34% in 1990 to just 1% in 2015.

The Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics 2023 highlights that 71.22% of Bangladesh's population can access to safely managed water services. Basic sanitation coverage is also at 69.68%, though only 45.0% have access to safely managed sanitation services. Less than 1% of the population practices open defecation, and 65.14% wash their hands with soap and water. Despite these achievements, Bangladesh still has significant work to do to meet the SDG targets for WASH services fully.

Since the approval of the NWSSP in 1998, the WASH sector in Bangladesh has faced numerous changes, creating both new challenges and opportunities. Rapid urbanisation, climate change, technological advancements, developing high-rise buildings in urban areas, and evolving rural lifestyles have significantly affected WASH requirements. Various issues, such as groundwater contamination, inadequate faecal sludge management, and the need to address universal access for hard-to-reach (HtR) areas and marginalised groups, highlight the necessity for a revised policy.

In 2010, the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council recognised water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) as a fundamental human right under UN Resolution 64/292. On the other hand, in its ruling, the Honourable High Court division of the Supreme Court mentioned under Article 32 of the Bangladesh Constitution that every citizen has the fundamental right to safe and pure drinking water. It is the state's responsibility to ensure this right. Thus, WASH rights need to be acknowledged, understood, and promoted in the revised policy—and actively practised.

Additionally, COVID-19 underscored the critical role of hand hygiene. Improved hygiene directly contributes to reducing high child mortality rates and undernutrition. Investments in hygiene have also proven to be highly cost-effective. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly emphasise hygiene as a priority. Given these imperatives, policy revision is essential to integrate these priorities.

### 1.2 Key Challenges in the WASH Sector

Safe drinking water remains a critical issue due to groundwater contamination (arsenic, iron, manganese, salinity) and increasing pollution of surface water from industrial and household waste. Microbial contamination, particularly *E. coli* in household water supplies, exacerbates

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<sup>2</sup> Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation: 2015 Update and MDG Assessment

malnutrition and stunting. Addressing these issues requires investment in alternative water sources, improved treatment technologies, and behaviour change campaigns to protect water sources and ensure safe water for all.

Bangladesh has nearly eliminated open defecation, but the rapid expansion of sanitation facilities with inadequate capacity to manage faecal sludge, especially in urban areas, results in growing concern to minimise environmental contamination. To address this concern, safe and sustainable collection, transport, disposal, and treatment and re-use/disposal of human waste, along with ensuring improved/hygienic toilets are imperative. Decentralised wastewater treatment technologies, such as improved septic tanks with sewer and faecal sludge treatment plants, are crucial. Additionally, sludge management in commuter toilets (buses, trains, ships) remains unaddressed, highlighting the need for comprehensive solutions.

Bangladesh's rural landscape is undergoing a significant transformation due to universal electricity access, extensive road networks, and internet connectivity. These changes are influencing rural lifestyles and WASH needs, necessitating tailored interventions in the revised policy to address these evolving demands.

Delivering services in hard-to-reach (HtR) areas such as hilly regions, riverine and coastal islands, swamps, and tea gardens presents significant challenges. Marginalised groups, including urban slum dwellers, also face unmet WASH needs. In addition to geographical barriers, poor maintenance, ineffective technologies, lack of regulation, and natural disasters threaten service sustainability. Impoverished and vulnerable groups have significantly lower WASH access.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts face distinct issues due to deforestation and topographic changes. Activities like cash crop farming and firewood collection have reduced water retention, drying up springs and canals. Limited aquifers and difficult terrain make tube wells unfeasible in many areas, while lake water in Rangamati remains underutilised due to technological gaps and inadequate institutional support. Although open defecation has decreased, expanding hygienic sanitation is hindered by material transport issues and limited awareness. Additionally, developing Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials in ethnic minority languages remains a significant obstacle. Importantly, incorporating their unique cultures and norms is essential for addressing these barriers.

Bangladesh's rapid urbanisation coupled with developing high rise building has strained existing WASH infrastructure in urban areas, especially in big cities. This surge in population creates significant challenges in developing and maintaining safe and reliable WASH services. Innovative urban WASH management solutions like decentralised systems, advanced water and wastewater treatment technologies, digital tools, and creative financing are essential to meet cities' growing demand for sustainable WASH services.

Climate change poses a severe threat to WASH services, with increased floods, droughts, and salinity intrusion. Adapting WASH infrastructure to withstand these impacts is crucial for ensuring service continuity in vulnerable areas. Integrating climate-resilient measures into the revised policy will be key to addressing these challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted WASH services, highlighting vulnerabilities in infrastructure and service delivery. Supply chain issues and lock downs hindered the maintenance of facilities, while marginalised communities faced acute shortages of sanitation supplies. Strengthening WASH systems to withstand future disruptions through resilient infrastructure, better hygiene education, and digital monitoring tools will be vital for preparedness.

Considerable technological advancements have occurred since the approval of the NWSSP in 1998. Innovations like reverse osmosis, solar-powered pumps, SCADA systems, and mobile applications have significantly improved WASH service delivery and efficiency, particularly in resource-limited areas.

Considerable technological advancements have occurred since the approval of the NWSSP in 1998. Innovations like reverse osmosis, solar-powered water pumps, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA), digital platforms, automation and mobile applications have shown significant improvement in WASH service delivery and efficiency, particularly in areas with limited resources.

Sustainable WASH interventions demand innovative financing approaches, including public-private partnerships, blended finance, and community-based initiatives. Addressing disparities in funding between urban and rural areas, as well as for marginalised groups, is critical. Ensuring proper allocation and utilisation of funds will help achieve equitable access and sustainable outcomes. The private sector has emerged as a significant player in the WASH sector. Its growing role in technology, financing, and service delivery must be regulated to maximise benefits and safeguard public interests.

Furthermore, safe drinking water and sanitation are universally recognised as basic human rights. Access to WASH services, including water and soap for hand washing, can ensure this basic human right and is critical to improving nutrition, preventing disease, facilitating healthcare, maintaining school and workplace properly, and encouraging the full participation of women, girls, and vulnerable people.

Access to safe water and sanitation is a basic human right, critical for health, nutrition, education, and gender equality. SDG 6 broadens its scope beyond providing water and sanitation services by including the entire water cycle, emphasising inclusion, water quality, and equity. This shift compels Bangladesh to intensify efforts to meet these goals, particularly by mobilizing additional funding and adopting innovative approaches.

Policy fragmentation and a lack of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) remain major obstacles. For instance, decisions in agriculture or energy sectors often overlook their impact on water resources. A revised policy must focus on cross-sectoral coordination to optimise water use and ensure sustainability.

### **1.3 Rationale for Revision: Projecting a Path for the Future**

A comprehensive revision of the existing NWSS Policy (1998) is imperative to address the evolving challenges outlined in Section 1.2. While the 1998 policy guided significant achievements - including near-universal basic water access and the near-elimination of open defecation - emerging complexities demand updated approaches. Such a revision would also assist in achieving the targets set forth by the SDG 2030 Agenda, the Perspective Plan 2041, and the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100.

Three fundamental shifts necessitate this revision:

- ◆ **Changing Realities:** Rapid urbanisation, climate vulnerabilities, and technological advancements have fundamentally changed WASH needs since 1998. The policy must integrate climate resilience, smart water management, and urban sanitation solutions for high-density settlements.
- ◆ **Ambitious Global Commitments:** The SDG 2030 Agenda demands safely managed services that far exceed just basic access. It requires upgraded infrastructure, quality monitoring, and behaviour change strategies beyond the 1998 framework.

- ◆ Institutional Reform: The expanding roles of the private sector, NGOs, and digital systems necessitate stronger governance frameworks and financing models to ensure equitable and sustainable services.

The proposed National Policy for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (NP-WASH) 2025 will bridge these gaps by:

- ◆ Aligning with the SDG 6 goals and targets, Perspective Plan 2041 and Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100.
- ◆ Establishing WASH as a distinct sector with dedicated budgeting under national planning and accounting framework, such as IBAS++.
- ◆ Integrating cross-cutting issues like climate adaptation, equity, and circular economy approaches

This revision will guide Bangladesh to meet SDG targets while building systems resilient to future demographic, climatic, and environmental pressures.

#### **1.4 Crafting a Comprehensive WASH Policy: Approach, Methodology, and Structure**

The Policy Support Branch (PSB) of the ministry led the rigorous participatory process of revising the present version of the National Policy for Water Supply and sanitation (NP-WSS) 1998 and formulating the National Policy for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (NP-WASH) 2025. Under the guidance of the technical committee comprising members from the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), Water Supply and Sewage Authorities (WASAs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and Development Partners the Policy is developed. Relevant stakeholders, including DPHE, WASAs, Local Government Institutions (LGIs), NGOs, Development Partners, and sector professionals were consulted during various stages of the policy development. Existing relevant policies and strategies within the country were reviewed and relevant foreign policies, particularly those of Sri Lanka, Kenya, and India, were also consulted.

The policy is based on the analysis of the sector scenario, with a brief on its past captured in this introductory chapter. The second chapter presents a vision statement, policy goal, and objectives along with key principles that are to be adhered to. The third chapter delineates policies grouped into three blocks, policies for rural areas, policies for urban areas, and policies for addressing the cross-cutting issues. The fourth chapter outlines the institutional arrangements for the sector as a whole and the policy implementation in particular.

## Chapter Two

### 2. Vision, Goal, Objectives, and Guiding Principles

The policy is structured around a vision, goal, objectives, and guiding principles. It is divided into three broad categories:

- I. Policy for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene
- II. Policy for Urban Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene, and
- III. Policy for Addressing Cross-Cutting Issues and Context-Specific Challenges.

As the rural and urban contexts in Bangladesh show distinct socio-economic and cultural features, the policies are drawn separately while also addressing the issues that cut across rural and urban contexts.

#### 2.1 Vision

Bangladesh envisions universal access to sustainable, climate-resilient, and safely managed water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services for all.

#### 2.2 Goal

To ensure safe, sustainable, affordable, adequate, accountable, climate-resilient, and rights-based water supply, sanitation, and hygiene services.

#### 2.3 Objectives

The National Policy for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (NP-WASH) 2025 aims to reduce waterborne diseases, improve public health, and guide all WASH sector stakeholders. It outlines 10 specific objectives, grouped into six thematic blocs:

- **Thematic Bloc 1: Sector Strengthening and Capacity Building**

1. Establish a dedicated WASH sector through legislative reforms to enable decentralised governance, accountability, and participatory planning processes engaging all stakeholders.
2. Strengthen core institutional capacities across government agencies, local authorities, implementation partners (NGOs, private sector), and community representatives to design, regulate, and monitor WASH services effectively.

- **Thematic Bloc 2: Service Delivery**

3. Ensure reliable, universally accessible WASH services through climate-resilient infrastructure and sustainable, priority-driven management systems.
4. Optimise service models through coordinated public, community, self-service, and accountable private-sector delivery mechanisms.

- **Thematic Bloc 3: Technological, Social, and Service Innovation**

5. Develop and promote disaster-responsive, climate-resilient technologies and sustainable nature-based solutions, applying circular economy principles, innovative service-delivery models, and community-led engagement systems to address evolving WASH challenges.

- **Thematic Bloc 4: Inclusion and Cross-Cutting Issues**
  6. Prioritise underserved groups, including women, persons with disabilities, elderly citizens, and third-gender (Hijra) communities in all WASH infrastructure planning and service design.
  7. Ensure safe and gender-sensitive WASH facilities while institutionalising participatory decision-making that ensures fair representation of women, youth, adolescents, elderly populations, people with disabilities, and children in WASH service delivery, planning, and governance.
- **Thematic Bloc 5: Financing**
  8. Increase public financing for WASH and explore innovative financing mechanisms including sustainable financing. Increase and safeguard public financing for WASH through dedicated budget allocations, fiscal decentralisation, and integration into national development budget.
  9. Mobilise private and innovative financing through blended finance instruments, results-based contracts, and public-private partnerships, with safeguards for equitable service provision.
- **Thematic Bloc 6: Learning and Sharing**
  10. Establish a national WASH Data Observatory and knowledge, learning, and innovation Hub to systematically monitor sector performance, consolidate innovations, and translate evidence into policy and programme design.

## 2.4 Scope

The policy applies to all residents of Bangladesh, ensuring nationwide coverage of WASH services.

## 2.5 Guiding Principles

The following eight guiding principles underpin the NP-WASH 2025, replacing the National Policy for Safe Water Supply and Sanitation 1998:

1. *Integrated and Multisectoral Approach:* Ensure access to safe WASH services for all through coordinated action across water, health, education, and climate sectors, with prioritisation for the most disadvantaged through good governance, transparency, and accountability.
2. *Rights to WASH:* Recognise WASH as a basic human right, prioritising it over other water uses and ensuring affordability, equitable access, and gender-responsive design. .
3. *Enabling Environment:* Promote stakeholder collaboration and coordination encourage private sector and social entrepreneur involvement, and prioritise transparent financial management.
4. *Sector Regulation and Standards:* Establish and enforce standards for safe, high-quality, and sufficient WASH services that address gender-specific needs.
5. *Sustainable and Accountable Financing:* Increase government allocations, maintain fair tariffs, and coordinate with international funding agencies, financing institutes, and private investment to support WASH infrastructure and operations, while ensuring transparent and accountable financial management including payments linked to verified results.

6. *Citizen Engagement and Participatory Planning*: Ensure meaningful community participation through participatory tools such as community scorecards, in all stages of WASH services, ensuring inclusivity, equity, and cultural sensitivity while respecting local customs, faith, and religious beliefs, and leveraging existing community platforms (e.g., WASH committees) to promote ownership and sustainability.
7. *Phased Improvement*: Gradually enhance the quality, reliability, affordability, and accessibility of WASH services through innovative technologies, efficient resource management and multisectoral learning exchanges.
8. *Risk Management*: Apply Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles to minimise environmental and climate risks, eliminate social discrimination in WASH service delivery, and integrate indigenous knowledge, local customs, faith and religious values for equitable and culturally resilient solutions.

## Chapter Three

### 3. National Policy for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (NP-WASH) 2025

The National Policy for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene is framed and delineated based on the spatial characteristics of urban and rural contexts. Policy statements for water supply are addressed separately from those for sanitation and hygiene reflecting their distinct nature and requirements. In addition, policy statements are formulated to address cross-cutting issues, integrating 10 specific objectives and 8 guiding principles into the three sub-categories: rural, urban, and cross-cutting issues and context-specific challenges.

The NP-WASH 2025 provides a comprehensive policy framework to address the diverse and evolving challenges in Bangladesh's WASH sector. The policy aims to ensure universal access to safe, sustainable, and climate-resilient WASH services by focusing on rural and urban contexts, cross-cutting issues, and context-specific challenges<sup>3</sup>. This approach will contribute to improved public health, environmental sustainability, and socio-economic development, aligning with national and global development goals.

#### 3.1 Rural Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene

##### 3.1.1. Policy for Rural Water Supply

3.1.1.1. Service Level: Ensure a basic service level, progressing to optimal service levels in the near future and prioritising equitable access for hardcore poor, low-income communities, and homeless individuals through subsidised services where feasible.

3.1.1.2. Cost Sharing and Recovery: Adopt a cost-sharing principle for WASH infrastructure, with the government determining equitable ratios to ensure accessibility for all, alongside targeted safety nets for poor households, and implement a phased approach to achieve full capital expenditure (CAPEX) recovery, incorporating periodic reviews to balance affordability and financial sustainability

3.1.1.3. Priority Areas: Focus on arsenic- and saline-prone areas, underserved regions, and water-stressed zones to expand safe and affordable water coverage, addressing critical gaps in service delivery.

3.1.1.4. Technological Innovations: Prioritise invention and innovation in green, sustainable, space-optimised, and climate-resilient water management technologies to ensure equitable and efficient service delivery.

3.1.1.5. Piped Water Systems: Promote piped water systems in densely populated villages facing water scarcity or quality issues, if found technically and financially viable for full operation and maintenance (O&M) cost recovery, including depreciation.

3.1.1.6. Site Selection: Implement equity-based site selection for public water points using integrated digital mapping (including population density, social data, and existing sources) and site-specific technology assessments and mapping to ensure fair, inclusive access for all communities.

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<sup>3</sup> Cross-cutting policies (Section 3.3) apply universally unless specified otherwise. Rural (3.1) and urban (3.2) implementations may adapt these principles contextually.

3.1.1.7. Surface Water Utilisation: Develop and rehabilitate alternative drinking water sources such as ponds, rivers, canals, haors, and baors, incorporating proper treatment and contamination prevention measures.

3.1.1.8. Service Quality: Ensure all rural water services are accessible, affordable, acceptable, and reliable by focusing on good governance, sustainability, equity, integrity, human rights, resource mobilisation, accountability, and low-carbon, energy-smart WASH solutions.

3.1.1.9. Energy-Smart Infrastructure and Service: Incentivise and promote the adoption of renewable energy and energy-smart technologies through targeted subsidies, tax exemptions, awareness-raising, and capacity-building initiatives to accelerate uptake.

3.1.1.10. Occupational Rights and Safety: Ensure safe, fair, and dignified working conditions for all workers in water supply infrastructure and services, including informal workers, by providing access to protective gear, fair wages, social security, training, and legally enforceable protections against exploitation

### **3.1.2. Policy for Rural Sanitation and Hygiene**

3.1.2.1 Service Level: Ensure at least a basic minimum service level for sanitation and hygiene, aiming to achieve safely managed sanitation for all in the near future.

3.1.2.2 Financial and Technical Support: Provide assistance to households in constructing and maintaining safe sanitation facilities, particularly targeting the extremely poor.

3.1.2.3 Hygiene Education: Implement nationwide hygiene education campaigns through social mobilisation, and promotion to drive sustainable behavioural change, prioritising hand hygiene, menstrual hygiene management, and safe WASH practices.

3.1.2.4 Cultural Sensitivity: Develop and disseminate Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials in culturally appropriate formats and local languages, including those spoken by ethnic minority communities, alongside Bangla, to ensure inclusivity.

3.1.2.5 Technological Innovations: Prioritise invention and innovation in green, sustainable, space-optimised, and climate-resilient nature-based solutions for wastewater, faecal sludge, and solid waste management to safeguard public health and ecosystems.

3.1.2.6 Waste as Wealth: Encourage and incentivise circular economy approaches to transform waste into valuable resources and to strengthen links with sustainable and integrated water resource management, particularly in water-stressed areas and arsenic- or saline-prone regions.

3.1.2.7 Occupational Rights and Safety: Ensure safe, fair, and dignified working conditions for all workers in sanitation, sewerage and solid waste infrastructure and services, including informal workers, by providing access to mechanised equipment, protective gear, fair wages, social security, training, and legal protections against exploitation and discrimination, while promoting the Emptier to Entrepreneur (E2E) approach to transform their livelihoods.

3.1.2.8 Community Awareness: Integrate appropriate methodologies such as Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) in awareness-building activities into all sanitation and hygiene programmes to ensure community ownership and sustainability.

3.1.2.9 Faecal Sludge Management: Develop faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs) with minimal land requirements, utilising treatment and resource recovery options where feasible, while promoting low-carbon, energy-smart alternatives.

3.1.2.10 Solid Waste Management: Where required and deemed technically and financially feasible, develop and manage solid waste collection, transport, and disposal, particularly through small-scale initiatives supported by awareness campaigns and capacity-building programmes, ensuring environmentally sound practices and promoting low-carbon and energy-smart solutions.

3.1.2.11 Energy-Smart Infrastructure and Service: Incentivise and promote the adoption of renewable energy and energy-smart technologies through targeted subsidies, tax exemptions, awareness-raising, and capacity-building initiatives to accelerate uptake.

## **3.2 Urban Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene**

### **3.2.1 Policy for Urban Water Supply**

3.2.1.1. Service Level: Ensure a basic service level, progressing to optimal service levels 24/7 in the near future, while prioritising equitable access for slum dwellers, low-income communities, and homeless individuals through subsidised services where feasible.

3.2.1.2. Cost Sharing: Adopt a cost-sharing principle for WASH infrastructure, with City corporations/municipalities/WASAs determining equitable ratios to ensure accessibility for all, alongside targeted safety nets for poor households, and implement a phased approach to achieve full capital expenditure (CAPEX) recovery, incorporating periodic reviews to balance affordability and financial sustainability.

3.2.1.3. Water Supply Systems: Promote piped water systems in densely populated areas, ensuring technical and financial viability for operation, maintenance (O&M), and depreciation costs, while providing non-piped water options in fringe areas where piped systems are unfeasible.

3.2.1.4. Surface Water Utilisation: Surface water will get priority over groundwater if it is deemed technically and financially feasible.

3.2.1.5. Sustainable Technologies: Promote the invention, innovation, and diffusion of sustainable technologies for urban water management, including membrane treatment, managed aquifer recharge (MAR), and low-carbon, energy-efficient solutions, to reduce the environmental footprint of water systems, particularly in rapidly growing, water-stressed, or both urban settings.

3.2.1.6. Service Quality: Ensure water services are accessible, affordable, acceptable, and reliable for urban populations, focusing on sustainability, equity, integrity, human rights, resource mobilisation, and accountability.

3.2.1.7. Energy-Smart Infrastructure and Service: Incentivise and promote the adoption of renewable energy and energy-smart technologies through targeted subsidies, tax exemptions, awareness-raising, and capacity-building initiatives to accelerate uptake.

3.2.1.8. Occupational Rights and Safety: Ensure safe, fair, and dignified working conditions for all workers in water supply infrastructure and services, including informal workers, by providing access to protective gear, fair wages, social security, training, and legally enforceable protections against exploitation.

3.2.1.9. Integration into Development and Land-Use Plans: Fully integrate WASH service provision into local development and land-use plans, ensuring alignment with broader strategies for urbanisation, public health, and climate resilience.

### **3.2.2. Policy for Urban Sanitation and Hygiene**

3.2.2.1. Service Level: Ensure at least a basic minimum service level for sanitation and hygiene, to achieve safely managed sanitation for all in the near future.

3.2.2.2. City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS): Promote CWIS to ensure equitable access to safe and sustainable sanitation services for all urban populations, including the containment, collection, and treatment of wastewater and faecal sludge, particularly in slums and vulnerable, low-income settlements.

3.2.2.3. Sustainable Technologies: Promote and encourage the invention, innovation, and widespread adoption of smart, energy-efficient, low-carbon, and space-optimised technologies for the containment, collection, treatment, recycling, and reuse of wastewater, greywater, faecal sludge, and solid waste, aiming to minimise environmental impact.

3.2.2.4. Sewerage and Faecal Sludge Management: Develop sewerage treatment plants (STPs) and faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs) with minimal land requirements, incorporating resource recovery options such as biogas production, nutrient recovery, and recycling of treated wastewater for non-potable uses like irrigation and industry.

3.2.2.5. Solid Waste Management: Develop and manage integrated systems for the collection, transportation, and disposal of solid waste, ensuring environmentally sound practices by promoting circular economy approaches such as reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, and the recovery of valuable resources from waste to enhance sustainable resource use and minimise environmental impact.

3.2.2.6. Greywater Management: Encourage the recycling and reuse of greywater for non-potable applications such as irrigation, landscaping, and industrial use by promoting technologies and systems for the safe treatment and sustainable use of greywater to reduce pressure on freshwater resources and support integrated urban water management, particularly in water-stressed, arsenic-prone, or saline-prone urban settings.

3.2.2.7. Stormwater Management: Develop and maintain drainage systems to support urban sanitation and prevent floods and water logging.

3.2.2.8. Hygiene Education: Conduct comprehensive social mobilisation and hygiene promotion campaigns to drive sustainable behavioural changes, emphasising handwashing with soap, menstrual hygiene management, and safe WASH practices.

3.2.2.9. Cultural Sensitivity: Develop and disseminate information, education, and communication (IEC) materials in culturally appropriate formats incorporating unique cultural norms. These materials should include languages spoken by ethnic minority communities alongside Bangla to ensure inclusivity.

3.2.2.10. Occupational Rights and Safety: Ensure safe, fair, and dignified working conditions for all workers in sanitation, sewerage and solid waste infrastructure and services, including informal workers, by providing access to mechanised equipment, protective gear, fair wages, social security, training, and legal protections against exploitation and discrimination, while promoting the Emptier to Entrepreneur (E2E) approach to transform their livelihoods.

3.2.2.11. Energy-Smart Infrastructure and Service: Incentivise and promote the adoption of renewable energy and energy-smart technologies through targeted subsidies, tax exemptions, awareness-raising, and capacity-building initiatives to accelerate uptake.

3.2.2.12. Integration into Development and Land Use Plans: Fully integrate WASH service provision into local development and land-use plans, ensuring alignment with broader strategies for urbanisation, public health, and climate resilience.

### **3.3 Policy for Addressing Cross-Cutting Issues and Context-Specific Challenges**

#### **3.3.1 Private Sector, NGOs and Self-service:**

3.3.1.1. Encourage and enhance NGO participation in WASH service delivery, including their roles in knowledge sharing, innovation, and monitoring of WASH programmes, to foster sustainable and equitable solutions.

3.3.1.2. Develop an enabling environment by implementing fiscal incentives, streamlining regulatory approvals, and promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs), professional service providers, and social entrepreneurship to advance WASH interventions including transforming waste into resources and service delivery.

3.3.1.3. Incentivise and engage small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the WASH sector by enabling their participation in manufacturing, selling, and distributing WASH-related materials, equipment, and technologies.

3.3.1.4. Promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and result-based funding to expand WASH service coverage, particularly in hard-to-reach, arsenic- and saline-prone, water-stressed areas, and growth centres, complementing public effort.

3.3.1.5. Authorise private sector entities to develop WASH interventions including transforming waste into resources and undertake operation and maintenance (O&M) through tripartite formal legal agreements with Local Government Institutions (LGIs) and the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE).

3.3.1.6. Recognise and strengthen the informal private sector's role in WASH service delivery by building and developing capacity, improving access to finance, ensuring safe and quality services, and gradually integrating it into local WASH initiatives.

3.3.1.7. Support self-service WASH initiatives through technical assistance, including disseminating water source information, standard designs, specifications, and O&M guidelines. Targeted financial assistance may be provided where necessary, particularly for marginalised populations and hard-to-reach areas.

3.3.1.8. Strengthen quality control, monitoring, and surveillance of self-service WASH initiatives to ensure compliance with standards and improve service delivery.

### **3.3.2 Gender and Role of Women:**

3.3.2.1 Implement gender-sensitive WASH programmes, ensuring women and girls' safety, privacy, and dignity.

3.3.2.2 Ensure participation and reflect the voices of women and girls in the planning, decision-making, and management of WASH services.

3.3.2.3 Reduce women's time burden and time poverty by prioritising on-premise water access and subsidising water point installations and household connections for female-headed families.

3.3.2.4 Ensure men and boys, as well as women and girls, are included in awareness raising and education programmes on hygiene and water quality.

### **3.3.3 WASH for People with Special Needs:**

3.3.3.1 Ensure public WASH facilities are accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities, older people, and individuals with incontinence.

3.3.3.2 Encourage households and institutions such as educational institutions, healthcare centres, religious places, government, non-government, autonomous offices, shopping malls, factories, and private business centres to construct and maintain appropriate WASH facilities for persons with special needs.

### **3.3.4 Climate Change, Disasters, and Emergencies:**

3.3.4.1 Encourage households and institutions such as educational institutions, healthcare centres, religious places, government, non-government, autonomous offices, shopping malls, factories, and private business centres to construct and maintain appropriate WASH facilities for persons with special needs.

3.3.4.2 Mandate the integration of green infrastructure for greywater, stormwater, wastewater, and water recharge in climate-vulnerable WASH planning, supported by incentives for nature-based solutions.

3.3.4.3 Ensure and maintain WASH service preparedness and contingency plans for emergencies, disasters, and epidemics.

3.3.4.4 Provide emergency WASH facilities in disaster shelters and affected areas, free of charge and compliant with established standards, during emergencies, disasters, and epidemics, ensuring no financial cost to the user community.

3.3.4.5 Rehabilitate damaged public WASH infrastructure free of charge, requiring no financial contributions from the community, to at least pre-disaster standards while adopting a 'build back better' approach. Additionally, provide technical and (where required) financial assistance to restore self-service WASH infrastructures to pre-disaster standards under the same 'build back better' framework.

3.3.4.6 Proactively protect public WASH infrastructure from contamination and damage during emergencies while providing technical and (where required) financial assistance to safeguard self-service WASH infrastructures.

3.3.4.7 Integrate conflict-free, adaptive WASH planning to ensure equitable resource allocation and WASH access for displaced populations and host communities, especially during crises.



### **3.3.5 WASH for Hard-to-Reach Areas:**

3.3.5.1 Prioritise safe WASH facilities in vulnerable areas (coastal, hilly, haor, char, barind, tea gardens, and densely populated settlements such as slums and squatter settlements), promoting rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, surface water utilisation, and innovative technologies.

3.3.5.2 Allocate special budgets and financing mechanisms for WASH services in these regions.

### **3.3.6 Financing:**

3.3.6.1 Allocate a specific portion of the national budget for WASH initiatives, with a dedicated economic code.

3.3.6.2 In addition to existing financing mechanisms (including government budgets and micro-credit), the government shall explore innovative options such as public-private partnerships (PPPs), alternative bonds (including social impact bonds and sukuk), corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds, and other market-based instruments.

3.3.6.3 Ensure accountability, transparency, and efficiency in resource utilisation, financial planning, adequate and equitable budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation of WASH expenditures.

3.3.6.4 Develop robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to systematically track WASH financing flows, expenditures, and outcomes at national, regional, and local levels, including rural areas, urban areas, and growth centres.

3.3.6.5 Implement tiered pricing structures for WASH services to ensure affordability for low-income households, with targeted subsidies or waivers for the extremely poor and marginalised communities.

3.3.6.6 Institutionalise two dedicated financing mechanisms: (1) a National WASH Infrastructure Trust Fund for ageing infrastructure rehabilitation and upgrades, and (2) ring-fenced O&M funds in annual budgets to ensure long-term functionality.

### **3.3.7 Testing and Monitoring:**

3.3.7.1 Ensure national water, wastewater, and faecal sludge quality standards remain up to date with scientific advancements and public health requirements.

3.3.7.2 Mandate comprehensive water, wastewater, and faecal sludge quality monitoring systems with transparent public reporting of results.

3.3.7.3 Implement tiered water quality testing facilities where national facilities test all parameters required by national standards, district facilities address priority health and operational parameters, and upazila units test essential health parameters, ensuring decentralised universal access.

### **3.3.8 WASH in Institutions:**

3.3.8.1 Mandate appropriate, adequate, and inclusive WASH facilities with sex-segregated provisions (including MHM facilities in girls' and female toilets), sustainable maintenance, functionality, and provisions for persons with special needs in all educational institutions, healthcare facilities, religious places, government, non-government, and autonomous offices, shopping malls, factories, workplaces, private business centres, and commercial premises.

3.3.8.2 Promote safe faecal sludge management, and ensure water safety plans, sanitation safety plans, and related practices for all WASH initiatives in institutional settings.

3.3.8.3 Promote hygiene behaviours including appropriate use, upkeep, and maintenance of WASH facilities among students, staff, and healthcare service users.

3.3.8.4 Establish an enabling environment for children to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes through effective at school, home, and community hygiene practices.

### **3.3.9 Operation and Maintenance (O&M):**

3.3.9.1. Develop regulatory frameworks and enforce standards, monitoring systems, and financial instruments for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of all public and institutional WASH infrastructure and services, to ensure hygienic conditions, sustainability, and accountability

3.3.9.2. Prioritise investment for repair, maintenance, and rehabilitation of existing WASH infrastructures while planning for new WASH infrastructures.

3.3.9.3. Incentivise and engage the private sector, professional service providers, and social entrepreneurs in delivering O&M services for all public WASH facilities, including operation, repair, maintenance, and the implementation of water and sanitation safety plans.

3.3.9.4. Establish the 'implementer/owner responsibility' principle to ensure functionality, sustainability, and service quality in line with national standards, mandating that the implementing agency or owner assumes full accountability for delivering operation and maintenance (O&M) services, excluding suction hand pumps and mini submersible pumps, either directly or through qualified third-party providers.

3.3.9.5. Incur O&M costs through user fees, public budgets (e.g., ring-fenced O&M funds), CSR financing or blended financing mechanisms.

3.3.9.6. Enhance local capacity for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of WASH facilities and systems through training, resource allocation, and community engagement.

3.3.9.7. Establish sanitary inspection, water safety plans (WSPs) and sanitation safety plans (SSPs) as integral components of regular O&M in all water supply and sanitation systems.

3.3.9.8. Conduct annual WASH facility operation and maintenance audits, and publicly disclose the findings.

### **3.3.10 WASH for Transient People and Public Transportation**

3.3.10.1 Develop and implement regulatory frameworks to ensure compliance with WASH standards in public transportation services and at all tourist spots and transport hubs including stations, stops, ports, and terminals.

3.3.10.2 Collaborate with relevant agencies to establish protocols for regular cleaning and maintaining WASH facilities in trains, launches, long-route buses, and other transportation modes.

3.3.10.2 Ensure the provision of clean, accessible (including for persons with disabilities), adequate, and well-maintained WASH facilities at all tourist spots, fuel stations, and transport hubs, as well as onboard trains, ferries, launches, and long-route buses. These facilities must include gender-sensitive toilets, menstrual hygiene management systems, and handwashing stations for passengers

3.3.10.3 Incentivise and engage private sector investment in WASH facilities along highways and at tourist spots and fuel stations, ensuring accessibility for all individuals, including persons with disabilities.

3.3.10.4 Conduct training and awareness-raising programmes for transport workers to enhance WASH practices in transportation services.

### **3.3.11 Enlistment of Drillers (Hand Tube Wells and Production Wells)**

3.3.12.1 Establish a compulsory online enlistment system for all hand-tube well and production well drillers, incorporating (a) a publicly accessible database of registered drillers and (b) a mandatory assessment covering hydrogeology, drilling methodologies, and water quality testing, ensuring compliance with national standards.

3.3.12.2 Enlisted drillers must upload water well data, including water quality test results, to the national database after each drilling activity and submit this information to the Union Parishad, Upazila DPHE, and WASAs until the online system becomes operational.

3.3.12.3 Provide training and technical support to drillers to ensure compliance with best practices.

### **3.3.12 Digitisation in WASH:**

3.3.13.1 Promote data-driven decision-making and real-time monitoring using online systems, including IoT and sensor-based technologies, and encouraged the development of in-country open-source alternatives to proprietary tech.

3.3.13.2 Establish a publicly accessible National WASH Data Repository with user-friendly interfaces (e.g., dashboards, mobile apps) to ensure transparency, citizen participation, and accountability.

3.3.13.3 Ensure interoperability across all WASH-related platforms and applications by adopting standardised data formats to enable seamless information exchange.

3.3.13.4 Ensure digital and AI-based WASH services are accessible to all by providing offline options, local language interfaces, low-bandwidth functionality, and disability-friendly designs.

3.3.12.5 Promote use of GIS-based spatial mapping to identify underserved areas, prioritize equitable resource allocation, and monitor service coverage in real time.

### **3.3.13 Monitoring & Evaluation, Research & Development, and Capacity Building**

3.3.14.1 Develop Performance-based specific, measurable key monitoring indicators for WASH services in rural areas, urban areas, growth centres and integrate into national and subnational reporting systems to promote transparency and continuous improvement.

3.3.14.2 Conduct regular surveys to assess the coverage, equity, affordability, cleanliness, performance, and functionality of WASH services.

3.3.14.3 Ensure that new technologies are piloted and evaluated, with recommendations from competent authorities, before large-scale deployment.

3.3.14.4 Strengthen sector-wide WASH capacity by decentralising training programmes and fostering collaborative networks among academia, research institutions, and stakeholders to enhance planning, implementation, and operation & maintenance (O&M) capabilities for sustainable service delivery.

3.3.14.5 Strengthen WASH-related knowledge and research systems by establishing a national online WASH knowledge hub and concurrently, build sector-wide capacity by creating a collaborative research and training network involving academic institutions, research organisations, and relevant stakeholders.

### **3.3.14 WASH in Growth Centre**

3.3.14.1. Recognise Growth Centres as urban areas for the purpose of WASH infrastructure and service development, acknowledging their peri-urban and rural-urban transitional characteristics, despite their administrative classification as rural areas.

3.3.14.2. Outsource the operations and maintenance (O&M) of WASH infrastructure developed through public investment to third parties, ensuring sustainability and efficiency.

### **3.3.15 Legal Framework, Standards and Governance:**

3.3.15.1. Recognise a formal and dedicated WASH sector, enact legislation to establish a regulatory framework, and ensure legal protections for investors while safeguarding user interests through equitable access, affordability, and the prevention of exploitative practices."

3.3.15.2. Develop national standards for WASH services, including design, construction, and O&M.

3.3.15.3. Establish mandatory certification for all drinking water quality field test kits, arsenic-removal technologies, packaged water treatment plants, and household water filters through government-approved third-party laboratory validation and field performance testing, permitting only certified products to be marketed or included in public procurement.

3.3.15.4. Apply a WASH integrity approach to prevent corruption, ensure accountability, and promote equitable services, and a WASH security approach to safeguard WASH systems from physical, digital, and climate-related threats.

### **3.3.16 Emerging Issues**

3.3.16.1. Recognise and integrate mental health support into WASH programmes to reduce stress caused by inadequate services, and safeguard dignity, while prioritising vulnerable groups—including persons with disabilities, women, children, and sanitation workers.

3.3.16.2. Establish a national monitoring and public awareness system for emerging water contaminants, including microplastics, pharmaceuticals, and endocrine-disrupting compounds.

3.3.16.3. Phase out single-use plastics in WASH facilities by promoting sustainable alternatives like biodegradable materials and reusable containers, supported by awareness campaigns targeting manufacturers and users.

## Chapter Four

### 4. Institutional Arrangement and Implementation

The NP-WASH 2025 establishes a comprehensive institutional framework to ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of WASH services across Bangladesh. By defining the roles of key institutions, integrating WASH components into development projects, and mobilizing resources through innovative financing, the policy aims to achieve universal access to safe, sustainable, and climate-resilient WASH services. This comprehensive approach aligns with national and global development goals, contributing to public health, environmental sustainability, and socio-economic development.

#### 4.1 Institutional Roles

The roles of key institutions in implementing WASH services are outlined below:

##### Ministry's Oversight:

- Manage overall planning, identify investment projects, and coordinate with relevant ministries, government agencies (DPHE, LGED), WASAs, local government institutions, the private sector, NGOs, professional service providers, social entrepreneurs, and CBOs.
- Guide the Policy Support Branch (PSB) to lead policy implementation in collaboration with stakeholders.
- Establish dedicated funds for DPHE and LGIs to ensure regular operation, maintenance, and disaster management of WASH facilities.
- Conduct periodic reviews of the National Forum to enhance its effectiveness.

##### Roles of the National Forum for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (NF-WASH) :

The forum, chaired by the ministry's secretary, includes representatives from government ministries, agencies, and external support organisations. The Forum is renamed to include hygiene as the National Forum for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (NF-WASH).

- Oversee sector directives, coordinate activities, and evaluate progress.
- Review the performance of the Policy and Monitoring Committee and the Technical Committee.

##### Policy Support Branch's (PSB) Functions:

- Act as the ministry's focal point for policy implementation.
- Facilitate collaboration among sector agencies through the Policy and Monitoring Committee and the Technical Committee.
- Maintain contact with relevant ministries and departments to foster a supportive environment for policy implementation.
- Develop new strategies and guidelines as and when required aligning the policy.
- Amend existing strategies and guidelines time to time when required.

- Support relevant other ministries, divisions, and/or institutions in developing necessary documents consistent with this policy to ensure proper implementation of WASH activities under their respective jurisdictions and responsibilities.
- Provide management and secretarial support to committees and thematic groups.
- Dissemination of policies, strategies, and guidelines through decentralised channels at the local level.
- Establish a DPHE-led standardised system for WASH infrastructure for the country other than WASA areas and enforce penalties for non-compliance.
- Explore the feasibility of forming limited companies among city corporations and municipalities, and take necessary steps to amend laws to facilitate their establishment and operational collaboration.

#### **Responsibilities of WASAs and DPHE:**

- DPHE serves as the lead national agency, providing technical and institutional guidance for WASH implementation, except in areas where WASAs operate.
- WASAs manage water supply and sanitation in metropolitan areas, while municipalities and city corporations handle these services in non-WASA urban areas, with DPHE providing technical assistance.
- DPHE supports WASH initiatives, including drainage and solid waste management, site selection for WASH infrastructures, capacity building, and maintaining open defecation-free environments in both rural and urban areas outside WASA jurisdictions.
- DPHE will provide technical guidance, quality assurance, and capacity-building support to LGIs and stakeholders involved in WASH service delivery in Growth Centres.
- DPHE will support self-supply in WASH by providing technical assistance, facilitating linkages with supply chains for materials, equipment, and construction, and progressively enhancing quality control, monitoring, and surveillance.
- DPHE and WASAs collaborate with the private sector, NGOs, and CBOs to enhance resource generation and sustainability.
- DPHE will manage and operate a dedicated WASH Operation and Maintenance (O&M) fund outside WASA areas, ensuring sustainability, transparent governance, and accountability.
- In case of foreign-aided government projects with WASH components undertaken by government agencies other than WASAs, the relevant ministry will ensure DPHE's involvement from the initiation of the loan/grant process through to project implementation and it will act as the implementing agency with full administrative and financial authority for the WASH components under that loan or grant through separate projects in collaboration with city corporations, municipalities and other entities.

#### **Role of Local Government Institutions (LGIs):**

- LGIs (Zilla Parishad, Upazila Parishad, Union Parishad) will gradually assume greater responsibilities in WASH activities.
- Union Parishads will lead site selection for public water points with DPHE's technical assistance, ensuring equity-based access.
- City corporations and municipalities will manage faecal sludge and solid waste systems, independently or through clustering.

- Municipalities and city corporations may collaborate through memoranda of understanding (MoUs) or jointly owned companies to form regional clusters for improving WASH service delivery.
- Union Parishads will lead the planning, implementation, and monitoring of WASH services in Growth Centres in recognition of Growth Centres as key nodes in rural-urban economic development with technical support from DPHE.
- Recognising the limited institutional and financial capacity of many rural LGIs, they may outsource the operations and maintenance (O&M) of WASH infrastructure to third parties.
- Union Parishad may sign a tripartite agreement with a private entity for the development and O&M of WASH interventions in Growth Centres.

### **Role of NGOs, CBOs and private sector**

- They will assist and support WASH initiatives and service delivery in rural and urban areas, in collaboration with local government institutions and relevant government agencies.
- They will deliver comprehensive WASH services, including infrastructure development, operation and maintenance, billing, tariff collection, water quality management, knowledge sharing, innovation, and monitoring as per clause 3.3.1 Private Sector, NGOs and Self-service.

## **4.2 Policy Implementation Framework**

The success of Bangladesh's revised WASH policy depends on effective implementation, comprehensive monitoring, and responsive feedback mechanisms. The Local Government Division will oversee the coordination and monitoring of the policy's nationwide implementation.

The Policy Implementation Framework emphasises the importance of clear guidelines and a structured approach to translate policy objectives into actionable steps. It seeks to streamline responsibilities and ensure efficient coordination among the various entities involved in WASH activities. The ministry will consult with key stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, CBOs, and the private sector, to review and formulate strategies aligned with the policy.

To enhance WASH initiatives, avoid duplication, and ensure policy adherence, the ministry will engage in consultations with the relevant divisions of the Planning Commission, focusing on four key areas:

- Comprehensive Review: Assessing the progress of ongoing WASH activities, ensuring compliance with the policy, and addressing challenges.
- Strategic Planning: Developing visionary WASH programmes.
- Streamlined Approval: Reviewing WASH-related project proposals to ensure alignment with the policy.
- Efficient Implementation: Establishing cost-effective guidelines for assigning WASH activities to appropriate implementing agencies (e.g., DPHE, WASAs, NGOs).

All future WASH projects, whether implemented by government agencies, NGOs, or the private sector, must comply with the policy's principles. Non-compliant proposals must be revised before implementation. The respective ministry will coordinate these projects to ensure alignment with the policy framework.

The NGO Affairs Bureau will play a catalytic role in supporting the implementation of the WASH policy. It will ensure that NGO-submitted WASH projects comply with the policy, develop necessary guidelines and checklists for the review process, and keep the relevant ministry and agencies informed about the status of approved projects.

As the custodian of pollution control, water quality management, and environmental conservation, the Department of Environment (DoE) will take proactive measures aligned with the policy's objectives. Through monitoring, surveillance, and assessment programmes, the DoE will track surface and groundwater quality across Bangladesh, playing a pivotal role in the policy's success. The ministry will support the DoE through the Policy Support Branch (PSB).

Water Resources Planning Organisation (WARPO) in collaboration with Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and DPHE, shall delineate water-stressed zones and priority zones (e.g., water-stressed, climate-vulnerable areas) for water allocation for different sectors prioritising WASH services over other uses of water. It will establish a coordination mechanism with relevant sectors, including agriculture, industry, and the environment, to resolve conflicts and optimise water allocation.

Through the Economic Relations Division (ERD), the ministry will collaborate with bilateral and multilateral external support agencies to secure resource commitments for the Sectoral Programme. The NGO Affairs Bureau (NAB) will ensure that NGOs receiving foreign funds for WASH activities comply with policy guidelines and may seek assistance from DPHE and WASAs. Simultaneously, resource mobilisation efforts by LGIs, NGOs, and private sector agencies will focus on both hardware and software components at the national and local levels.

The Ministry of Finance will ensure sustainable WASH financing by integrating policy objectives into the national budget. It will develop regulatory frameworks to improve transparency and accountability in WASH financing. Key funding mechanisms include:

- Government Budgetary Allocations: Ensuring consistent and adequate funding through national budgets.
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Leveraging private sector expertise and investments for infrastructure and service delivery.
- User Fees: Implementing equitable and affordable fee structures, complemented by targeted subsidies for vulnerable groups.
- Innovative Financing Instruments: Utilising concessional loans, tax incentives, social impact bonds, Sukuk, CSR funds, and other mechanisms to attract investments.
- Separate Economic Code: Establishing a dedicated economic code for WASH sector investment and expenditure.

The National Forum, supported by the PSB, may establish thematic groups or assign responsibilities to existing groups to implement specific objectives. The PSB will provide management and secretarial support to these groups.

Sector institutions, including DPHE, WASAs, and LGIs, will implement their respective components of the WASH policy. LGIs will collaborate with their Standing Committees on WASH and WATSAN committees to coordinate with communities and stakeholders.

Government engineering departments, such as the Public Works Department (PWD), Health Engineering Department (HED), Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), and Education Engineering Department (EED), will adhere to the policy when constructing and managing WASH facilities. They will develop and implement effective operation and maintenance (O&M) systems and monitor their functionality. The PSB will engage these

departments and relevant ministries to ensure compliance, coordination, and proper monitoring of WASH activities.

The private sector and NGOs will be encouraged to invest in WASH infrastructure development, service delivery, and technology. Their activities will align with the national programme to achieve policy objectives.

Establishments such as weekly and daily markets, shopping malls, private healthcare facilities, diagnostic clinics, private educational institutes, hotels, restaurants, and recreational centres must ensure adequate and safely managed WASH facilities and services. Licensing processes may include preconditions requiring the provision of such facilities. The PSB will initiate dialogue with relevant ministries to enforce these requirements.

The Ministry, with technical support from the DPHE and in collaboration with the BBS, WASAs, LGIs, NGOs, and relevant stakeholders, shall establish and maintain a National WASH Data Repository. This repository will standardise, consolidate, and publish WASH data, including annual reports. All data will be made available through open-data platforms to ensure transparency.

To further strengthen the WASH sector, the government will work towards enacting legislation for drinking water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. This legislation will formally recognise WASH as a distinct sector, ensuring sufficient budget allocation. The PSB and DPHE will facilitate the development of national standards for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of WASH facilities, guided by a high-level technical committee comprising sector agencies, academia, and WASH experts.

Additionally, the PSB will develop occupational health and safety guidelines for WASH workers in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and its subordinate offices. These guidelines will align with the National Occupational Health and Safety Policy 2013 and its amendments to ensure a safe working environment.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) will build the capacity of DPHE, WASAs, LGIs, NGOs, and other stakeholders in WASH-related data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The BBS will produce user-friendly reports and dashboards to inform policymakers, stakeholders, and the public, and guide the implementation and revision of the policy and related strategies.

#### **4.3 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback**

A robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is essential for tracking the implementation of the WASH policy, assessing resource allocation, and measuring project outcomes. This system will rely on measurable indicators to evaluate progress, identify challenges, and facilitate evidence-based decision-making. Real-time data dashboards will enhance data collection mechanisms, analysis, and stakeholder access to information.

##### **Monitoring Framework:**

The Ministry will develop uniform, specific, and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) for monitoring WASH facilities and services nationwide, in collaboration with stakeholders such as DPHE, WASAs, LGIs, the Department of Environment (DoE), BSTI, NGOs, and private entrepreneurs. The National WASH Data Repository will be utilised to track service coverage, infrastructure functionality, and investment flows at national and sub-national levels, including rural areas, urban areas and growth centres, in coordination with Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) surveys and other national data systems.

The Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) will play a key role in monitoring and evaluating WASH projects. IMED will establish guidelines to assess the consistency, effectiveness, and sustainability of WASH initiatives, ensuring alignment with national priorities and targets. It will also provide capacity-building support to government officials, project staff, and other stakeholders involved in WASH projects.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) will conduct regular national and sub-national surveys to assess WASH coverage, accessibility, functionality, quality and sustainability. It will collaborate with relevant agencies to define and measure KPIs, identifying trends, disparities, and gaps in service delivery, particularly in underserved areas. User-friendly reports and dashboards will be produced to inform policymakers, stakeholders, and the public, guiding the implementation and revision of the policy and related strategies.

## **Coverage of WASH Services**

Coverage of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services in households, schools, healthcare facilities, and other institutions will be assessed to measure progress towards the policy's goals and objectives. Specific focus will be given to urban and rural settings, differentiating between basic service levels and safely managed services.

### **Water Supply Coverage:**

*Basic Service Level:* The proportion of households with access to a basic service level, providing adequate water quality to meet daily needs.

*Safely Managed Service Level:* Water must be available on the premises, meeting higher safety and accessibility standards.

### **Sanitation Coverage:**

*Basic Service Level:* The proportion of households with access to a basic sanitation service level.

*Safely Managed Service Level:* Excreta must be safely disposed of in situ and treated off-site.

### **Hygiene Coverage:**

The proportion of households with a hand washing facility equipped with soap and water at home.

Similar metrics will be applied to assess WASH coverage in schools, healthcare facilities, and other institutions.

### **Evaluation and Reporting:**

- Regular evaluations will be conducted, with findings shared through reports to ensure transparency and accountability.
- The ministry will publish yearly evaluation reports prepared by an independent agency.
- User-friendly reports and dashboards will be produced by the BBS to inform policymakers, stakeholders, and the public, guiding the implementation and revision of the policy and related strategies.

### **Feedback Mechanisms:**

- PSB will gather feedback through public hearings, surveys, regulatory mechanisms, and a dedicated portal or email address.
- Feedback will guide policy amendments and revisions, as and when required, ensuring it remains responsive to community needs.