

ARSENIC LEVEL IN HOUSEHOLD DRINKING WATER

Households were requested to provide a glass of drinking water that was tested for arsenic content. The Bangladesh standard for acceptable level of arsenic content is less than 50 micrograms per litre, while the World Health Organization's (WHO) guideline for an acceptable level of arsenic content is less than 10 micrograms per litre. Table 19, Annex A, shows that drinking water in 12.6 per cent of household (6.2 per cent in urban areas and 14.0 per cent in rural areas) exceeds the Bangladesh standard while 23.1 per cent (14.3 per cent in urban areas and 25.1 per cent in rural areas) of households exceed the WHO limit. There were 3.1 per cent of households (1.4 per cent urban and 3.5 per cent rural) with arsenic contamination higher than 200 micrograms per litre, and these households should be seen as prioritized as a matter of urgency as they are the most exposed to the harmful effects of arsenic consumption.

Discounting for arsenic contamination, the proportion of households using an improved drinking water source becomes 85.5 per cent (93.3 per cent for urban and 83.8 per cent for rural) when using the Bangladesh standard. However, using the WHO guideline for arsenic, 75.2 per cent of households are using an improved drinking water source in Bangladesh - 85.3 per cent in urban and 73.0 per cent in rural areas.

Map 17: Arsenic contamination in drinking water (≥ 50 micrograms/litre) by district, 2009

