

357 Feet Dream Path of Atani Pukur Par

NGO Forum for Public Health

Mymensingh is a city of slums. Atani Pukur Par is one of those 85 slums which are situated at 18 no. ward and around 4,000 people reside in it. Like the other slum areas it is also deprived of the proper urban facilities like safe water, improved sanitation, good drainage and footpath system. In addition to the geographic character as an earthquake risk zone these insufficient basic needs have made the area most vulnerable in terms of infrastructure and knowledge level. Shamima (42) CDC leader and resident of this slum said, "As a slum dweller we have to live with water logging, polluted environment for years as slum areas always remain out of the development priorities for municipality as these are the temporary settlement. Especially lack of proper drainage and footpath accelerates our sufferings." To consider all these issues this ward was selected as an intervention area. Based on risks, vulnerabilities and various needs chalked out through the intervention, different types of activities were carried out such as capacity building, awareness raising sessions, risk assessments, etc. Accordingly the co-financing of a 357 feet long drain cum footpath came in to priority list under the RRAP implementation plan. Around 40-50 families live in the lane and around thousand people daily use the lane but there is no proper drain and a very low footpath. Even during any minimum amount of rainfall, water used in adjacent households overflow the footpath, daily inundating the lane and creating a great suffering for all.

To implement the work the main challenge was to motivate contribution from the Municipality as very recently the Municipality contributed to another project of Oxfam as co-financing. But as it was in the priority list of Municipality for years and they could not start for lack of fund due to their own fund constraint they agreed to contribute here; and eventually around 34% (158,125 BDT) came from the municipality fund. For the smooth implementation of these schemes besides financially contributing, the Municipality also collaborated through joint planning, designing and monitoring in terms of ensuring regular supervision and monitoring through providing support related to security, place allocation, minimizing local conflict. After the completion of work Shamima said, "This was our years' long dream. We fought for this allocation for years but no result was found. But now a joint support from the Project and the Municipality helped us to live a healthy life. We will not have to suffer for water logging in the next rainy season. In addition to reducing water logging the raised and broadened footpath also allows easy mobility for the rickshaw or van in emergencies. It is recommended that as drainage system is a chain system, so it would be wise to take the whole slum or whole locality to create a proper drainage system if we really want to make the area free from water logging. Campaign and awareness related continuous activities also need to sensitize people for proper dumping of wastage and regularly clean their drains and premises to protect water logging. It says prevention is better than cure."