

Creating the Livelihood Opportunity through WASH Block

Md. Yousuf Ali, a 60-year-old resident of Shombhuganj under Ward 33 of Mymensingh City Corporation. Yousuf Ali has a small family consisting of him and his wife and they are homeless. They put up a makeshift home on a government khas land in Chamra Bazar area of Shombhugonj. Three or four years ago Yousuf Ali had a road accident which resulted in him losing one of his legs and he was in hospital for about 2 months. Before the accident, he worked as security personnel at a house and his wife was a housekeeper in others' homes. Before Yousuf lost his leg, his wife and he earned enough together to lead a comfortable life. After the accident he would fall ill quite often and due to his disability, he didn't have an earning source anymore. Their only son got married and left and due to financial constraints is unable to help his parents.

In 2020, when a WASH Block was constructed in Goruhata (Shombhuganj) in Ward 33 by the Project, Yousuf Ali and his wife had their makeshift home right beside the WASH Block. The WASH Block has 5 toilet chambers, 2 urinals, 1 bathing cubicle, 4 wash basins, 1 MHM corner and 1 submersible pump. During the construction of the WASH Block, Yousuf Ali would look after the contractor's stored construction materials and in return would be able to earn some money. That is when he got introduced to Project staff of **"Resilient,**



Inclusive and Innovative Cities of Bangladesh" of NGO Forum for Public. From the very beginning, he expressed his interest in taking lease of the WASH Block if the MCC was putting it up for lease once the construction was completed. He also reached out to the then Ward Councilor with his proposal because he wanted to work and wanted to earn a livelihood. The Councilor then appointed him as a caretaker. Back in October of 2021, Md. Mizanur Rahman who is in-charge of the local market also took lease of the public toilet but handed the reins to Yousuf Ali.

Right after, staff of NGO Forum provided a detailed orientation on cleanliness, hygiene maintenance, daily expense logbook, record keeping on the users and COVID-19 messages to Yousuf Ali so that he has a clear idea of his responsibilities. Since November of 2021, the WASH Block has been frequented by people who come to the marketplace and even by locals. On an average 120 people use the WASH Block daily which means that almost every day BDT 800 is earned and the care taker, Yousuf Ali, gets to keep BDT 300-400 every day. It is to be

mentioned that there were no public toilets in this area before and people would openly urinate and even defecate which degraded the environment.

According to Yousuf Ali the WASH Block has been a blessing in the lives of the shopkeepers, market goers and locals and also the users are more than happy to pay after using the WASH Block. The WASH Block has ensured a hygienic environment overall. Not only that, Yousuf Ali is immensely happy as he gets to earn a living through it. He said, "I am very grateful to NGO Forum for Public Health for helping me find an earning source again. I had lost all hopes of eating proper meals and earning a living but because of the WASH Block, I now can ensure those.

Project Focal: Md. Toriqul Islam

Author: Sudeshna Biswas