

The following tells the story of a community which not only demonstrates true progress in achieving one of the [Millennium Development Goals](#), but also where a number of the principles of the [Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness](#) are being followed, thus allowing the local community to reap the benefits.



Mr. Abdul Khaleque Mia (left), Chairman of the Union Parishad of Baldhara in Bangladesh, pumps water from one of the hand pumps the Union has recently procured. Union Parishads (UPs), are elected bodies and form the lowest local government unit in the rural areas of Bangladesh.

Mr. Mia has been Chairman of the Baldhara UP for 12 years and this is the first time the Union has been given responsibility for procurement. He and the other Union Council members find it encouraging to have been empowered with this responsibility on behalf of their community.

Millennium Development Goals:

The Government of Bangladesh is firmly committed to achieving 100% sanitation coverage by 2010 and 100% safe water supply coverage by 2011.



Goal 7: Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

In addition it has a policy to give local government bodies, including the Unions, a direct role in planning, implementation and maintenance of rural water supply and sanitation.

***Ownership:** Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and coordinate development actions. [Paris Declaration]*

The Embassy of Denmark in Dhaka is providing support to the Government in achieving these results through the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Programme (WSSPS) Phase II under which their support is aligned with the national systems of the Government, including for public procurement. This commitment includes providing support to developing the necessary capacity for which they have been collaborating with the [UN Procurement Capacity Development Centre](#)¹. For the Water Supply and Sanitation component of this programme, the Union Parishads are the focal point for implementation of all activities.

¹ The UN Procurement Capacity Development Centre (www.unpcdc.org) supports the development of national and sub-national procurement capacities through advocacy and field-based advisory support services as well as through developing and disseminating guidance materials, tools, methodologies and approaches relating to procurement capacity development.

Alignment: Donors base their support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures. [Paris Declaration]

Value for Money:

Meticulously following the procurement guidelines that have been prepared by the project in the local language, Bangla, which adhere to the Bangladesh Public Procurement Law and Regulations, Mr. Mia and the Union Council conducted the procurement for 29 dug wells, 5 rainwater harvesting systems and 10 deep tube wells. The Union Council were very motivated to get the best deal possible for their community. So much so that when, even after retendering, the bids they received for the 10 deep tube wells were above the market price, they decided to cancel that procurement and instead use the funds to procure additional dug wells, which both not only provide better value for money, but also water supply to a larger number of families.

Accountability:

As elected officials, the Union Council are extremely aware that they are accountable to the community that they serve. The posting of procurement notices, as well as details of contracts awarded, on a notice board outside the Union Headquarters – a busy area frequented by the local population – ensures that the community are able to monitor the procurement process and its outcomes, and thus hold their leaders accountable.



Challenges:

The process wasn't entirely without challenges for the Baldhara Union. The Union Secretary, the only one to have received formal procurement training, moved on to a new job in another area. Furthermore, the compulsory standard bidding documents are in English, which neither the Union members nor the suppliers speak.

The procurement guidelines were an invaluable support in surmounting these challenges and, using these, the five member procurement committee was able to discuss and agree on pragmatic solutions to the challenges it encountered. This has also enabled them to develop as a team, ensuring that the community now has sustainable capacity and is not reliant on the knowledge of one individual. They are, however, hoping that standard bidding documents will be issued in Bangla, which will not only make things easier for them, but will also increase the transparency and accountability of the procurement process.

Positive Outcomes:

To date more than 600 families in Baldhara have benefited from this initiative. The news has spread throughout the Union that the water from the new pumps is good and the demand is now increasing from other villages who would like to have a hand pump. Mr. Mia and his colleagues in the Union are now preparing a new proposal for funds for additional wells as well as for the replacement of latrines.

In the meantime this pilot is being eagerly followed back in the capital Dhaka, by the Government, by the Embassy of Denmark, and also by other development partners. The hope is that in future the UPs can be given responsibility for procurement in relation to delivery of other public services. Obviously scaling up will bring with it additional challenges, and implementation of an effective monitoring system is clearly also a priority.