

**37th WEDC International Conference, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2014**

**SUSTAINABLE WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES  
FOR ALL IN A FAST CHANGING WORLD**

**Monitoring of WatSan projects: application of information  
technology by local governments in Bangladesh**

*N. Osman & E. Kabir, Bangladesh*

**BRIEFING PAPER 2003**

---

*Union Parishads (UP) are the lowest tier of local government in Bangladesh. The territory is called 'Union' and there are 4451 Unions in Bangladesh. The average population of a Union is 25000 and average area is about 25 Sqkms. Union Parishads are elected councils to govern development activities of the Union. Almost all development projects in Bangladesh have root level partnership with UPs mainly for monitoring of projects, thus, reporting of progress is a regular tasks for UPs. With the increasing decentralisation process in Bangladesh, local governments are being empowered and they are given project implementation role. Hygiene Sanitation and Water Fund Project (HYSAWA) has given full project authority to UPs; the activities include planning, implementation, fund management, monitoring and reporting of community based WatSan projects. HYSAWA has introduced online reporting and monitoring system for UPs, which has drastically improved project monitoring and reporting. This paper describes the online reporting system of UPs including lessons learnt.*

---

**Local government in Bangladesh**

There are 64 districts in Bangladesh, each further subdivided into upazila (464 sub-districts). The area is further divided into several unions. Unions (Union Parishads) are the smallest rural administrative and local government units in Bangladesh. Each Union is made up of nine wards. Usually one village is designated as a Ward. There are 4,451 Unions in Bangladesh. A Union Council consists of a Chairman and twelve members including three members exclusively reserved for women. Union Parishads are formed under the *Local Government (Union Parishads) Act*. The boundary of each Union is demarcated by the Deputy Commissioner of the District. A Union Council is the body primarily responsible for development activities within the local limits of the union.

**The organization: HYSAWA Fund (Hygiene, Sanitation and Water Fund)**

The Government of Bangladesh has embarked on a new approach to improve rural water supply and sanitation in the country by setting up a national fund for rural hygiene, water supply and sanitation. The fund is called the HYSAWA Fund and is governed by a board with representatives of senior Government officials (30%), local government institutions (30%), NGOs, donors and civil society (40%). The HYSAWA Fund was set up by the Ministry of Local Government and registered as a non-profit company under the *Bangladesh Companies Act 1994*. It is envisioned as a multi-donor funding mechanism for large-scale delivery of sanitation and water supply facilities through the Local Government Institutions (LGIs) mainly the Union Parishads. Governance at the local government level is ensured through establishing systems for accountability, transparency, community participation and mandatory public disclosure system. HYSAWA Fund retains its core function of technical support, fund management, monitoring and audit.

Since its founding in 2007, HYSAWA Fund has played a major role in supporting decentralization strategy of the Government of Bangladesh through devolution of administrative and financial authority down to Union Parishad. A significant change in the funding procedure and a paradigm shift from "business as usual" to a direct demand driven approach in planning and implementing projects at local level, are two

challenging tasks being carried out at present. With funding from HYSAWA and a matching community contribution the Union Parishads engage either a partner NGO or project staff for community mobilisation and hygiene promotion. They also install water and sanitation infrastructure based on community demands driven through participatory process. HYSAWA provides formal training to all UP functionaries as well as expert agencies for direct and hands on support to UPs.

### **The Project: (HYSAWA Fund Project)**

The present ‘Hygiene Promotion, Sanitation and Water Supply Fund Project’ has been promoting the UP-based investments focusing on the poor, un-served and under-served areas. The long-term goal of the project is to contribute to the government’s policy to reduce poverty through improved public health and sustainable environment and thereby reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for water and sanitation. The project is working to strengthen the capacity of Local Government Institutions (LGIs), Union Parishads in particular, for public service delivery. The activities include improvement of hygiene behavior and access to hygienic sanitation and safe drinking water

Once enlisted with HYSAWA Fund by complying with basic criteria (the poor, un-served and under-served areas) process, the Union Parishads have become the implementing agency of the project within its territory. The UPs receive training, hands on capacity development support and fund from HYSAWA. Presently HYSAWA is working with about 500 Union Parishads.

HYSAWA provides funds directly to UP. In HYSAWA Fund project, UPs enjoy significant authority over project planning and implementation, fund management, procurement of contractors and partner NGOs (PNGOs). PNGO staff with the help of locally identified volunteers mobilizes communities to understand their hygiene, sanitation water supply situation based on which they help communities to generate and plan their WatSan demands for implementation. These demands for water supply and community latrines infrastructures are then forwarded to UPs. The UP then compiles all demands and submits online to HYSAWA for approval. Upon approval, the UP goes for tendering process to hire contractors to install these infrastructures. HYSAWA provides funds to UP upon fulfillment of set milestones for each payment. Hygiene promotion and sanitation related activities are generally carried out by PNGO staff and volunteers.

### **Monitoring and reporting**

HYSAWA has adopted monitoring and reporting guidelines for Union Parishads and the system is introduced with necessary training to Union Parishad functionaries, partner NGO staff. There is three PNGO staff in each Union and each staff is responsible for project activities in three Wards, therefore covers nine Wards and they are designated as ‘Community Organizer’. With the support of local volunteers these Community Organizers do all project activities mentioned above.

Each volunteer facilitates a particular Community Development Forum (CDF) where he or she lives. He or she keeps track of progress of the CDF in a social map and a register. At the end of each month monthly progress is shared with respective Community Organizer. In each ward there are about twenty such community forums. So, each Community Organizer has to compile about sixty CDF data from three wards. Finally three staff compiles about 180 to 200 CDF data to get Union progress for the month.

The Union Parishads monitor project progress against target from this report and it is mandated for UPs to submit monthly reports as well financial report to HYSAWA and here comes the challenge for HYSAWA to receive and compile monthly reports from about 500 Unions. Previously, hardcopies of these reports were sent to HYSAWA and HYSAWA had to compile these reports to get a total picture. As a result, receiving delayed reports, missing and errors, lengthy procedure were common incidents in the past.

HYSAWA fund has to report to Government, donors and governing board in different periods, individual UP progresses are summed up to generate total progress. UPs have their own targets as well as HYSAWA has its overall targets of particular projects. Outputs of the activities are concerns for Union Parishads as well as HYSAWA to monitor progress trend against monthly, quarterly and project targets.

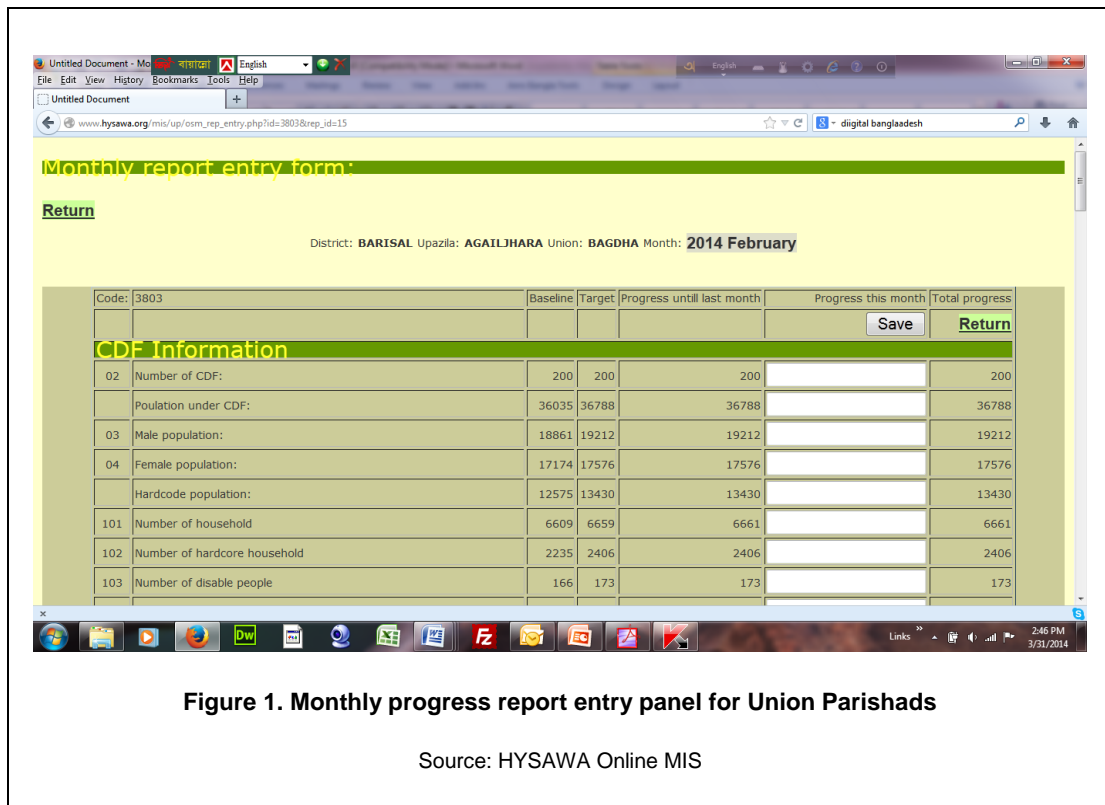
### **Application of information technology**

Bangladesh is moving forward with ‘Vision 2021’ a major focus of which is ‘Digital Bangladesh’. Digital Bangladesh implies the broad use of computers, and embodies the modern philosophy of effective and useful use of technology in terms of implementing the promises in education, health, job placement and poverty reduction. The government further emphasized on the four elements of “Digital Bangladesh Vision”

which are human resource development, people involvement, civil services and use of information technology in business.

Though use of computers started in Bangladesh in early nineties, but in over twenty year's time, the use has increased significantly but still limited to cities and small towns. The Union Parishads are in rural areas, many of them do not even have electricity facilities. To expand the benefits of information technology especially internet, government has established Union Information Service Center at the Union level and this center is primarily being used as digital service providers to citizens. The services include scanning, photos, internet use, letter and document compose, emails etc. The IT infrastructures for the centre are provided by the government.

HYSAWA took this opportunity of having a centre at UP and with providing some additional support to enable this centre to access and use internet. HYSAWA has further developed an online reporting system for UPs. The System is named as HYSAWA ONLINE MIS. The system has provision for UPs with to submit water and sanitation schemes s derived from community demands, monthly progress report, financial reports etc. The PNGO staff can log on to the system using their user name and password. There are set options for progress data entry for each of the reporting indicators as well baseline and target data. The UPs can monitor progress both cumulative and monthly against targets. HYSAWA can see live update and auto compiled progress reports according to month, union, upazila, district and can also compare the whole project's progress. The data comes through the report are, for example, number of scheme demand from community for water and sanitation installations, number of hygienic latrines at baseline and on a monthly basis during project implementation, number of people benefiting from installed WatSan schemes, number of people received hygiene promotion messages, number of people received training, other demographic and project output data desegregated by male, female, children, and disability. Following are some snapshots from HYSAWA online MIS, demonstrating its functions:





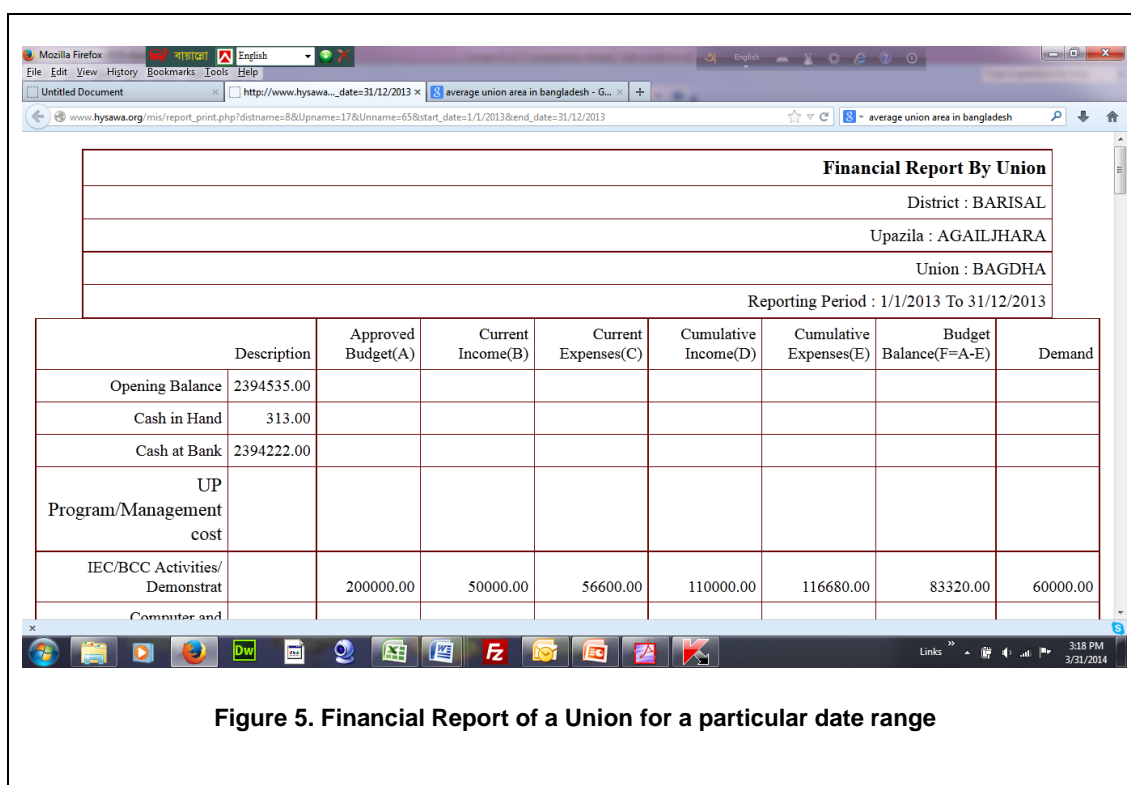


Figure 5. Financial Report of a Union for a particular date range

## Lessons

- Application of Information and Communication technologies is mostly a matter of initiative. Once people realize the usefulness of any technology they tend to use it.
- Reporting has become so easy for local government to submit it online to funding agency.
- No chances of missing or delay and no hassle for huge data entry and compilation and more importantly it is PAPER LESS.
- HYSAWA is receiving a live update of the progress of different water and sanitation activities in different unions.
- IT infrastructure in Unions is not sufficient, more attention and support in this regard is necessary
- As it is online, the reports are accessible to Unions, different support agencies who provide support to UPs, donors and other authorized users.
- Progress reports are accessible publicly through HYSAWA website ([http://www.hysawa.org/mis/web\\_rep\\_list.php](http://www.hysawa.org/mis/web_rep_list.php))

## Conclusion

The system has created much enthusiasm among Union Parishads as this has been their first experience. The recent recruits of UP Secretaries are young and they are quite comfortable with the use of this system. The HYSAWA donors are also excited about the system. Recently UNDP in Bangladesh has planned for development of a similar system for their projects. LGSP, the largest local government project in Bangladesh is also developing a similar system to receive financial reports from UPs. HYSAWA fund has shown the way of online reporting from UPs and now it is being replicated by others, thus, the use of information technology by the UPs is scaling up as this has broader scope to use in other sectors as well. The reporting system has all possible indicators related to water, sanitation and hygiene; so this system can easily be used by other projects/donors that work with UPs and receive reports. HYSAWA envisage that Government will come up with a single reporting format to take report from 4451 UP and 464 Upazilas as part of its fiscal monitoring process and a common reporting system for all projects that work with local government.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to extend thanks to the HYSAWA team based in the programme working areas, Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for their support to HYSAWA.

---

### **References**

Local Government Division 2012 *Union Parishad Operational Manual*. Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of Bangladesh.  
Government of Bangladesh 2009 *Union Parishad Act*, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of Bangladesh.  
HYSAWA Fund *Union Parishad Manual 2009* Bangladesh.

---

### **Contact details**

Md. Nurul Osman  
House 22 Road 113/A, Gulshan-2, Dhaka,  
Bangladesh  
Tel: +8801713077048  
Fax: +8802 9889729  
Email: osman@hysawa.org  
www: www.hysawa.org

M Enamul Kabir  
House 22 Road 113/A, Gulshan-2, Dhaka,  
Bangladesh  
Tel: +8801711593953  
Fax: +8802 9889729  
Email: ekabir@hysawa.org  
www: www.hysawa.org

---