

POLICY BRIEF: *Promoting Equity and Inclusivity in WASH Services in Pokhara Metropolitan City*

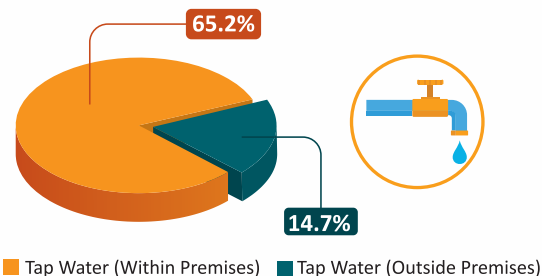
Overview:

Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services is fundamental to human well-being and public health. Nepal has made significant strides in improving water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, with a focus on inclusivity and sustainability. Though, achieving equitable and inclusive access to these services remains a challenge, particularly in ensuring equitable access for all residents. This policy brief examines existing policies and identifies areas for improvement to enhance equity and inclusivity in WASH services, with a specific focus on Safely Managed Sanitation Services (SMSS) and Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) in Pokhara Metropolitan City.

Pokhara Metropolitan City has made significant progress in expanding access to WASH services in recent years. However, challenges persist, including inequalities in service provision, inadequate sanitation facilities, and limited access for marginalized communities. Despite efforts to improve WASH infrastructure, there is a need for targeted interventions to address these issues.

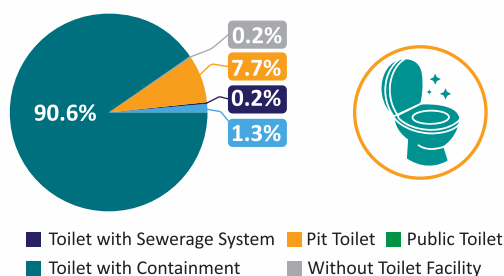
Status of Water Supply at Pokhara Metropolitan City

Households by main source of drinking water (NSO, 2021)



Status of Toilet Coverage at Pokhara Metropolitan City

Households by types of Toilet (NSO, 2021)



Problem Statement:

Despite overall improvements in service coverage, certain groups, including low-income households, women, children, and persons with disabilities, continue to face barriers to accessing clean water and sanitation facilities. These disparities not only affect public health outcomes but also perpetuate social inequalities within the community. The policy brief aims to address the specific challenge of inequitable access to WASH services in Pokhara Metropolitan City.

Methodology:

A comprehensive methodology was employed, including literature reviews, stakeholder consultations, and in-depth policy analysis, to assess existing WASH policies at both national and local levels. Findings were compiled into a comprehensive review report and presented to relevant stakeholders for validation and feedback.

Policy, Legal, and Regulatory Framework

Federal and Provincial Level:

The **Constitution of Nepal 2015** guarantees citizens' rights to clean water and sanitation.

The **National WASH Policy 2023** prioritizes basic services and gender equality by focusing on provision, conservation, municipal planning, cost-sharing, tariff recovery, regulatory transformation, private sector engagement, and social inclusion.

The **Drinking Water and Sanitation Act 2022:** aims to ensure easy access to clean water and sanitation while respecting citizens' basic rights and managing sewage & wastewater effectively.

National Drinking Water Quality Standard 2022: Sets parameters for water quality testing, mandates Water Safety Plans, and includes Health Based Guideline Values.

Local Government Operation Act 2017: Emphasizes coordination, disaster management, partnerships, and inter-governmental cooperation for effective WASH service delivery.

Gandaki Province WASH Bill: Lacks fundamental rights recognition, hygiene provisions, and comprehensive gender equality and social inclusion clauses crucial for effectiveness.

Gaps in Gandaki Province WASH Bill

Missing Fundamental Recognition

The Act lacks a preamble acknowledging the fundamental rights of individuals to access safe water and sanitation services, highlighting a gap in recognizing these basic rights

Hygiene Gaps and Unaddressed Needs

The Act falls short in incorporating hygiene-related provisions, neglecting aspects like handwashing practices and menstrual hygiene management. Additionally, it fails to address the specific water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs of women, children, senior citizens, differently-abled individuals, and sexual and gender minority (SGM) groups

Inadequate GESI Provisions

While the Act includes measures like concessions for economically disadvantaged individuals and families, as well as tariff reduction for marginalized groups or disaster-affected individuals, it lacks comprehensive provisions for gender equality and social inclusion. There is a critical need for explicit and comprehensive clauses in the Act to ensure responsiveness to GESI considerations

Municipal Level- Pokhara Metropolitan City:

Pokhara Metropolitan Environment and Natural Resource Protection Act 2077:

Emphasizes citizens' right to a clean environment and responsible natural resource utilization, with a focus on water resource conservation.

Lacks provisions for concessions to disadvantaged households, gender-responsive infrastructure, and comprehensive data disaggregation on water resource utilization.

Solid Waste Management Regulation:

Views solid waste as a resource, promoting private sector involvement and waste reduction strategies for efficient management.

Fails to include capacity-building for stakeholders, occupational health and safety for sanitation workers, provisions for disadvantaged households, gender-responsive infrastructure, and comprehensive data disaggregation.

Pokhara Metropolitan Education Regulation 2074:

Provides for school WASH provisions and scholarships for marginalized students but lacks age and gender-specific facilities and comprehensive implementation.

Doesn't mandate age and gender-specific toilets or hygiene supplies; implementation process for inclusive measures remains undeveloped.

Pokhara Metropolitan Health Policy 2074:

Identifies critical absence of WASH provisions, necessitating integration of comprehensive measures for public health improvement.

Fails to integrate comprehensive WASH measures, including disability-friendly facilities, hygiene promotion, and emergency preparedness.

Annual Plans and Programs of Pokhara Metropolitan City:

Prioritizes WASH and GESI, aiming for equitable infrastructure and solid waste management, with specific initiatives for urban poverty alleviation and water supply systems.

It lacks specific details on how these initiatives will be implemented, sustained, and monitored. Additionally, there is a lack of information on the maintenance, community involvement, and long-term sustainability of the funded projects, such as water supply systems.

Budget Overview of Pokhara Metropolitan City:

Total budget of NRs. 7,151,517,000, with 88% for development; WASH allocated only 1.82%, indicating the need for increased investment in critical sectors like public health and sanitation.

Relatively lesser allocation to WASH (1.82%) compared to other sectors, indicating insufficient investment in critical public health infrastructure.

Policy Recommendations:

Strengthening Policy Framework:

Amend existing policies and enact new legislation to address gaps in sanitation, inclusivity, and climate change adaptation aligning with national WASH policies, for equity inclusivity, and sustainability.

Enhancing Coordination and Implementation:

Improve coordination among government agencies, NGOs, private sector, and communities to streamline WASH service delivery. Develop participatory decision-making and community engagement mechanisms responsive to local needs.

Increasing Resource Allocation: Allocate more budget to WASH, focusing on sanitation, hygiene promotion, infrastructure, capacity building, and public awareness to address existing disparities and improve service coverage in underserved areas.

Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion:

Integrate gender equality and social inclusion into all WASH planning, implementation, and monitoring. Ensure accessible infrastructure and services for diverse needs like women, children, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities.

Build Capacity and Awareness:

Invest in capacity-building for local governments, community organizations, and stakeholders. Conduct public awareness campaigns promoting hygiene, water conservation, and sustainability.

Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation:

Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress, identify challenges, and measure impact of WASH interventions. Utilize disaggregated data for evidence-based decision-making that specifically targets vulnerable populations.

“ Now that we've learned a lot about Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and our rights, it's clear that as professionals, we deserve access to essential facilities. Our constitution ensures our rights are protected, promoting equality for all. It's crucial that facilities are consistently provided, regardless of employment status, be it permanent or temporary, ”
reflected a participant from the OHS Training organized in Pokhara.

“ I worry about our community's future without a proper tariff calculation method to keep our water services running. The lack of water treatment and quality monitoring has exposed us to serious health risks, with contaminants in our water. During the rainy season, our main water source becomes inaccessible, leaving us struggling for clean water when we need it most, ”
voiced a representative from the slum, encapsulating community perspectives.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Pokhara grapples with significant WASH challenges that necessitate the enactment of dedicated legislation with equity provisions to effectively manage water resources. Additionally, solid waste regulations must prioritize enhancing stakeholder capacity and ensuring worker safety. Moreover, there is an urgent need to amend education regulations to include comprehensive WASH provisions, ensuring inclusivity for all students. Integrating WASH considerations into health policies is paramount for safeguarding public health and promoting equity within the community. Finally, increased budget allocation is essential to provide the necessary support for these efforts and address WASH disparities effectively in Pokhara.

References:

- National Population and Housing Census 2021
- National Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Policy 2023
- Drinking Water and Sanitation Act 2022
- National Drinking Water Quality Standard 2022
- Local Government Operation Act 2017
- Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2019
- Sustainable Development Goals: Status and Road Map (2016-2030), National Planning Commission Nepal
- Constitution of Nepal 2015

Disclaimer:

This publication has been made possible through the financial support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the assistance of the Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA). The content has been produced by the ENPHO using primary and secondary sources. While ENPHO has made every effort to ensure the accuracy and detail of the information provided, the views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of ENPHO or its supporting agencies. Any part of this publication may be reproduced with proper acknowledgment to ENPHO.

For more details, please contact:



Environment & Public Health Organization (ENPHO)
Thapagaon, New Baneshwor
977-1-5244641, 5244051
enpho@enpho.org
www.enpho.org

