

Work for a Better Bangladesh (WBB Trust)

2023-24 Summary Report



WORK FOR A BETTER BANGLADESH (WBB) TRUST

In 2023-2024, Work for a Better Bangladesh (WBB) Trust's focused on initiatives related to streets, open public spaces (OPS), and markets. These efforts align with the organization's 2023-2027 plan, which prioritizes sustainable urban development and improving the quality of life in Dhaka by promoting safer streets, accessible public spaces, and sustainable markets. The following summary highlights the key outcomes and achievements within each project.

Streets

Pedestrian Rights

The Dhaka Area Plan (2022-2035), developed by the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) which is Dhaka's planning department, proposes significant advancements for urban planning in Dhaka, aiming to create pedestrian-first environments and reduce motor vehicle dependence. WBB's work contributed to the formulation of pedestrian rights policies within the DAP, emphasizing non-motorized transport and safer pedestrian routes. Key elements of the DAP include:

- 1233 kilometers of non-motorized transport paths and 202 kilometers of bicycle lanes were proposed.
- Safer pedestrian crossings, including zebra crossings every 200 meters.
- Efforts to manage vendors as part of urban planning.

Key Activities:

- 33 public events were held, including car-free street events and community engagement activities, drawing attention to pedestrian safety and cycling.
- Engagement with local NGOs and communities helped organize events benefiting children and adolescents, promoting play and socialization.
- Media coverage included eight articles and 57 reports, raising public awareness of the need for sustainable transport options in Dhaka.



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Active and Safe Routes to School

WBB focused on promoting active and safe routes for children walking or biking to school, particularly in the Rayerbazar area, which is a lower-income neighborhood. The program aimed to provide children with access to safer infrastructures, improving their physical health and reducing air pollution.

Key Activities:

- Letter campaigns were initiated, with students advocating for safe routes to the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).
- Community meetings increased awareness of safe routes among 84% of the students who participated.



Open Public Space

OPS Advocacy

WBB's efforts centered around advocating to preserve and develop open public spaces, particularly in lower-income neighborhoods. We worked to implement policies for parks, playgrounds, and other green spaces as outlined in the DAP. The DAP proposed the creation of 5 regional parks, 55 water-based parks, 14 eco-parks, and 14 other parks in greater Dhaka.

Key Activities:

- WBB held several community events and demonstrations advocating to renovate and preserve parks, which included campaigns for reopening parks and protecting specific spaces like Panthokunjo Park.
- The project raised awareness about the importance of OPS through mass media and seminars, fostering a demand for clearer policies for park maintenance and community use.
- The advocacy efforts included letters to stakeholders to promote protecting and maintaining community spaces.



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Mobile Playgrounds

Many communities in Dhaka do not have easy, walkable access to a park or public space for children to play. Mobile playgrounds provided children in underserved neighborhoods with opportunities to engage in physical activities. WBB organized these playgrounds in unused public spaces with the aim of reducing spatial inequality and supporting children with disabilities.

Key Activities

- Three weekly mobile playgrounds were established in different communities within Rayerbazar, with around 70-80 participants, predominantly children and adolescent girls, attending each event.
- The initiative helped promote physical activity and socialization among children in areas lacking formal playgrounds.



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Markets

Market Advocacy

WBB's market-related work focused on advocating for the sustainability of the 16 farmers' markets established under the FAO project. In addition, WBB continued to advocate for food system transformation, by promoting markets as public spaces that celebrate cultural heritage. Our efforts in 2023-2024 focused on increasing capacity and understanding of the market system in Dhaka.

Key Activities:

We conducted desk-research to understand the current state of markets in Dhaka and their role in food access. The report identified challenges in the spatial distribution of markets, with some areas experiencing "food market deserts" due to uneven access. Issues like sanitation, solid waste management, gender-responsive market designs, and fire safety were highlighted as urgent problems. WBB advocated for improved policies and funding to manage and sustain farmers' markets. A new urban food desk has been created under the Local Government Division (LGD) of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Co-operatives. Our goal is to ensure this desk becomes operational and is allocated funds for managing and operating farmers' markets. A recommendation paper on the sustainability of farmers' markets addressed this goal and was shared with relevant authorities.



Conclusion

WBB Trust's 2023-2024 report underscores the importance of urban planning initiatives that prioritize pedestrian safety, public space preservation, sustainable markets, and community engagement. Our work in Dhaka, particularly our focus on DAP implementation, helped bring attention to critical issues affecting the city's sustainability and inclusivity. WBB's efforts have laid a foundation for future collaborations with stakeholders, community leaders, and policymakers to create livable, equitable, and resilient urban environments for all.