

Work for a Better Bangladesh (WBB)

2025-2026 Summary Report



This report presents the progress and achievements of WBB Trust during the 2025–2026 year in advancing livable cities in Bangladesh. Through our activities, WBB worked with government agencies, civil society, schools, and local communities to improve streets, open public spaces, urban agriculture, and public markets. Despite a challenging political environment, WBB continued to promote development that supports walking, accessibility, safe public spaces, sustainable food systems, and community well-being.

Streets:

The Streets Program aims to reclaim streets as public space through placemaking events, car-free street initiatives, policy advocacy, public awareness campaigns, and partnerships that show how streets can become community spaces. A key challenge for the Streets Program is the lack of dedicated budget allocations for pedestrian infrastructure improvements, despite significant investments in roads and transport infrastructure by Dhaka City Corporations.

In the changing political landscape, the project shifted its emphasis towards strengthening relationships with government institutions, evaluating existing interventions, and generating evidence to advocate for the implementation of the Detailed Area Plan (DAP).

The project evaluated ongoing placemaking and car-free street initiatives and the findings showed strong support from the community. Almost all parents (95.7%) supported the initiative, and all nearby shopkeepers (100%) said the activities did not negatively affect their businesses. Seventy children who took part in the evaluation said they enjoyed the events, felt safe, and were happy with the timing. However, the study also found challenges in continuing the activities, including limited support from local government and the community and a lack of storage space for play equipment.

The project conducted a wide range of public engagement activities that reached diverse audiences across Dhaka. During the reporting period, WBB Trust organised:

- 37 weeks of recurring car-free street events across two neighbourhoods.
- 16 public events promoting sustainable urban mobility.
- Seven school awareness campaigns celebrating International Noise Awareness Day.

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- Three temporary play street interventions demonstrating the potential of reclaiming streets for children.
- World Bicycle Day cycle rally involving more than 150 cyclists.
- An online World Bicycle Day discussion.
- A seminar on walkable cities and reducing car dependency in collaboration with the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA).
- National White Cane Day campaign advocating for safe and accessible footpaths.
- An online discussion on creating walking- and cycling-friendly cities.
- Social media campaign celebrating World Cities Day.

In total, these activities engaged approximately 3,600 participants and brought together nearly 30 partner organisations, including government agencies, schools, transport professionals, civil society organisations, and community groups. These campaigns, seminars, and rallies increased the visibility of walking- and cycling-friendly initiatives, initiated dialogue with government officials and transport authorities, and encouraged community involvement in urban mobility discussions.





Open Public Space:

This year, we aimed to improve the quality, accessibility, and inclusivity of parks and playgrounds in Dhaka by strengthening the governance of public spaces and supporting the implementation of the Detailed Area Plan (DAP). Bangladesh transitioned from an interim government to a newly elected government during the 2025–2026 reporting period. The interim government advisors had different priorities, which made it difficult to access key decision-makers, while frequent staff turnover across government offices also affected continuity. Despite political instability and limited engagement from government institutions during much of the reporting period, the project conducted quality assessments of 7 public open spaces in Dhaka and a detailed accessibility assessment at Shahid Farhan Faiyaj Playground, which is a playground specifically developed for persons living with disabilities. The research generated practical recommendations that highlighted infrastructure deficiencies and governance issues affecting equal access to public spaces. The assessment revealed that while several parks provide free public access and basic amenities such as drinking water, significant barriers remain for many users.

The dedicated assessment of Shahid Farhan Faiyaj Playground demonstrated that infrastructure specifically intended for persons living with disabilities still contains accessibility barriers. This led to a recommendation about the need to ensure universal design is implemented across all public spaces rather than creating stand-alone and segregated facilities.

The project's strongest contribution was influencing governance and institutional action. Working closely with Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) the project worked with the government to strengthen how public open spaces are managed. During the reporting period:

- One encroached public park was successfully reclaimed.
- DNCC established a nine-member steering committee to oversee parks, playgrounds, and public spaces across all 52 wards.
- The committee was mandated to prevent illegal occupation, improve maintenance and security, preserve public access, and regularly monitor conditions.
- The project also laid the groundwork for developing Dhaka's first community-based park management policy, which will be advanced during the next reporting period.

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The advocacy effort coincided with continued public investment in urban open spaces. DNCC allocated approximately USD 7.05 million for parks, playgrounds, and eco-park [1]development. DSCC allocated approximately USD 15.02 million for parks and playgrounds. WBB's advocacy also contributed to the renovation of four parks, two playgrounds, and the restoration of seven canals, demonstrating continued government investment in public open spaces and WBB's success at moving the public space agenda forward.

The Mobile Playgrounds and Community Play Space Initiative aimed to improve access to safe and inclusive play opportunities for children living in underserved informal settlements in Dhaka. For more than 5 years, the project has been transforming underused neighbourhood spaces into play areas through participatory planning and low-cost, community-led improvements.

In 2025-2026, following consultations with local residents, caregivers, and children, an underused open space in Kolabagan informal settlement was redesigned into a play space. The area was used for gatherings, and play but lacked play equipment. Based on community priorities, the project installed a basketball pole and a rope climbing structure. These simple, durable, and low-maintenance play elements were selected because they encourage active play while reducing risks of theft or vandalism. The space will be evaluated in the next reporting year to assess its use and the intervention's success.

We will continue into 2026-2027 by

- Conducting a broader evaluation to measure the impacts across all play space sites on children's play behaviour, physical activity, and community use of the space.
- Advocating for replication of similar low-cost play spaces in other informal settlements across Dhaka.
- Continuing technical support for government agencies interested in scaling temporary and mobile playground initiatives.

[1] The Detailed Area Plan (DAP 2022–2035) recommends the development of 14 eco-parks and 55 water parks. Eco-parks are planned as large green spaces, generally covering more than 200 acres, with a focus on environmental conservation and opportunities for recreation, education, research, and ecotourism. Water parks are generally smaller than eco-parks, with most ranging from 50 to 100 acres. Some are as small as 2–4 acres, while a few exceed 200 acres.



Urban Agriculture:

The School Vegetable Garden Initiative showed how small-scale urban greening can support food production through community participation. WBB established a school vegetable garden to demonstrate the idea. A small part of the school playground was converted into a vegetable garden without affecting students' regular use of the space. Twenty students took part in workshops on climate change, healthy and safe food, and the benefits of urban gardening.

They also received hands-on training in growing vegetables, learning the process from sowing to harvesting. The garden produced 10 varieties of vegetables, including red spinach, green amaranth, spinach, water spinach, cucumber, pumpkin, ridge gourd, bitter gourd, Malabar spinach, and ash gourd. The produce was sold to teachers and guardians, and the proceeds were saved to support future garden maintenance. The garden will be evaluated in the next reporting year to assess its use, benefits, and sustainability.



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This year, WBB Trust will focus on strengthening relationships with key stakeholders, including government officials, network organisations, and local communities.

A major priority will be to increase WBB Trust's visibility through meetings, community activities, public events, media, and social media. This is important as government organisations and officials continue to adjust following the political transition in 2024. Building these relationships now will help WBB Trust work more effectively with government agencies as their roles and structures become more stable.

The streets program will focus mainly on expanding the ASRTS project to new schools and neighbourhoods, organising World Car Free Day, and continuing small-scale greening activities. The market program will assess the quality and conditions of 20 markets in the DNCC area. For Open Public Spaces (OPS),

WBB Trust will study three potential park networks in selected wards to improve connections between parks and other public spaces. In two additional wards, We will assess the availability of usable public spaces for two small improvements in each ward, such as adding seating or play equipment.



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