

Transforming Hygiene Practice, Food Safety & Quality in Dhaka’s Traditional Food Markets



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BACKGROUND

Bangladesh is undergoing a rapid food system transformation. Traditional fresh markets remain essential for affordable food access, food safety, and product quality, yet poor infrastructure and unsafe market environments undermine vendor and consumer confidence. GAIN's baseline assessment revealed widespread dissatisfaction due to inadequate lighting, poor ventilation, unsafe flooring, lack of sanitation facilities, absence of safe drinking water, and unstructured waste management. Food safety knowledge among vendors was limited, increasing risks of foodborne diseases.

METHODS

A baseline assessment was conducted among vendors and consumers in selected Dhaka traditional markets. GAIN collaborated with local authorities, market committees, and community members to design and implement infrastructure upgrades and vendor-focused behaviour change interventions. Interventions included food safety training, installation of improved infrastructure, and creation of a Technical Working Group to coordinate market governance.

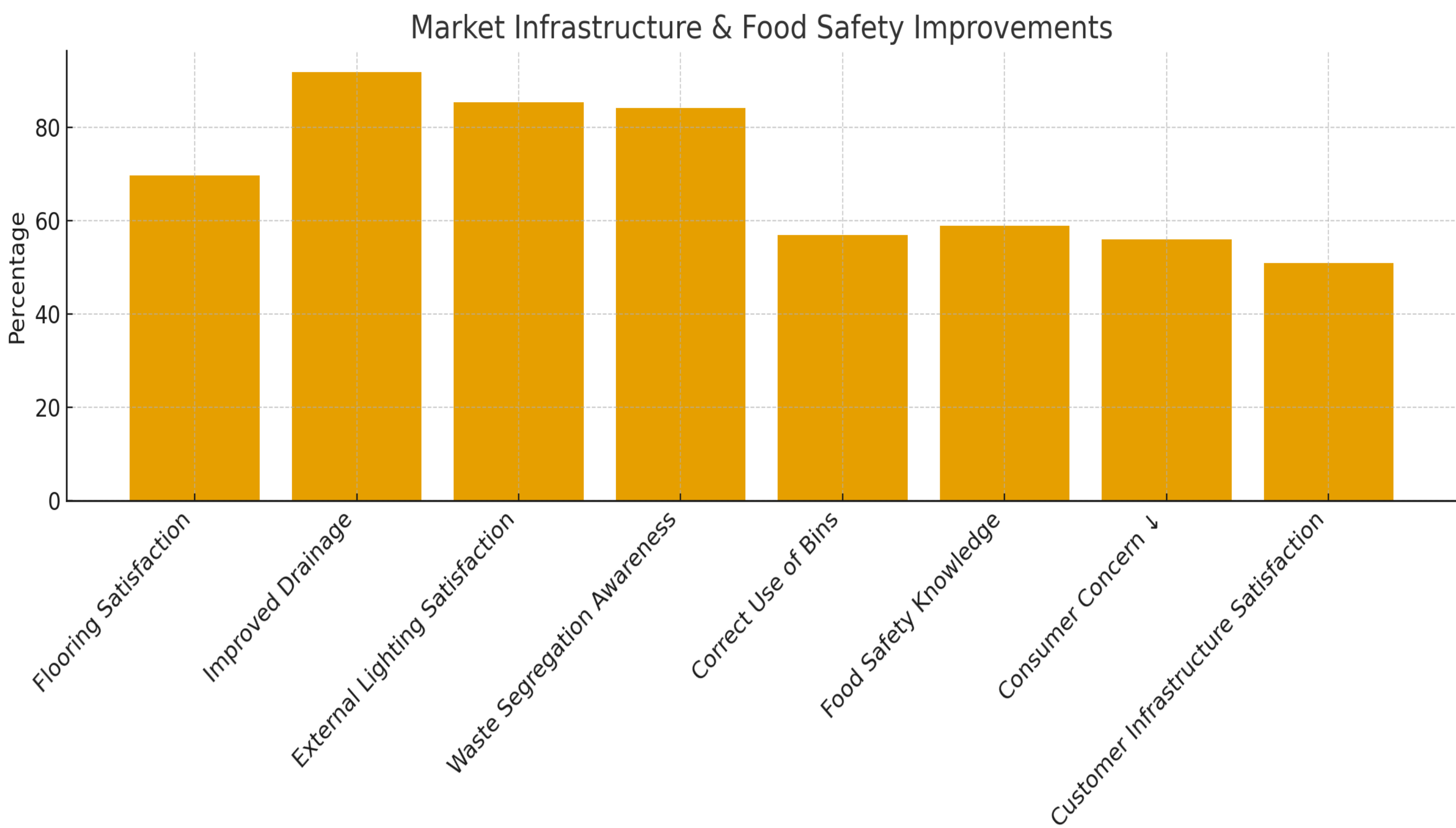
RESULTS

Infrastructure Upgrades:

- 69.7% of vendors satisfied with upgraded flooring.
- 92% reported improved drainage with no waterlogging.
- Satisfaction with external lighting rose to 85.4% from 66.3%.
- Gender-disaggregated washrooms, breastfeeding corners, and safe water stations installed.

Food Safety & Behaviour Change:

- Vendor awareness of waste segregation increased to 84.3%.
- 57% reported correctly using colour-coded bins.
- 58.9% improved knowledge on food safety and cross-contamination.
- Consumer concerns about shopping reduced by 56 percentage points.
- Customer satisfaction with infrastructure increased from 22% to 51%.



CONCLUSION

Market infrastructure upgrades combined with structured vendor education have significantly strengthened hygiene, food safety practices, and the overall consumer experience in traditional markets. The collaborative governance model established through the Technical Working Group demonstrates strong potential for scale-up across other urban markets in Bangladesh. The targeted markets have already shown notable progress through enhanced capacity-building initiatives and improved operational systems. As cleaner, safer, and more efficient spaces for selling fresh produce, they set a new benchmark for market transformation.

However, similar improvements are still needed across all food markets to ensure that consumers of all income levels have access to safe, nutritious food in a healthy and well-managed environment

Acknowledgement
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Evidence based Outcomes

Daily customer footfall increased from 400–450 to 1,200–1,500 during the project period

COVID-19 transmission remained very low, with only 4% of vendors affected across both markets

Market committees contributed their own time and financial resources to upgrade market infrastructure

Vendors' food safety knowledge improved by 84.3% following targeted capacity-building training.

GAIN is providing ongoing technical support to City Corporations to strengthen prevention and control of foodborne illnesses in markets.

