

11th Knowledge Sharing Virtual Seminar Session

Date: November 12, 2025 (Wednesday)

Time: 15.00 - 16.30 Bangladesh Time (GMT +6)

Topic: Nutrition and Urban Health

Seminar Minutes

Bangladesh Urban Health Network (BUHN) hosted an important knowledge-sharing session on Wednesday, 12 November 2025, titled “Nutrition and Urban Health.” The virtual dialogue focused on the growing challenge of urban malnutrition and examined how rapid urbanization is reshaping food environments, dietary behaviours, and access to nutrition services. Moderated by Maliha Khan Majlish, Project Associate at BUHN, the session gathered experts from ISUH, BNNC, IPHN, BFSa, UNICEF Bangladesh, and various NGOs to discuss urban nutrition challenges. Participants examined integrated healthcare approaches and highlighted the Mothers at Work initiative, which promotes maternity rights and breastfeeding for working women, while noting barriers to accessing breastfeeding spaces and breaks. The discussion also addressed food safety concerns and broader urban malnutrition issues. The session closed with a call for stronger multisectoral collaboration, policy innovation, youth engagement, and improved integration of urban health and nutrition services to build a more resilient urban health system.

Seminar Objectives:

- Explore how urbanization and lifestyle transitions shape food environments.
- Share global and local evidence on urban nutrition transitions.
- To share empirical findings on the nutritional quality, safety, and labeling of commonly consumed foods in urban slums and low-income neighborhoods.

Key Resource Persons:

Contribution	Resource Personnel
Welcome Remarks	Dr. Margub Aref Jahangir Health Specialist (Urban), UNICEF Bangladesh
Chief Guest	Dr. Md. Rizwanur Rahman Director General, Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC)
Special Guest	Dr. Mohammed Eunus Ali Director, Institute of Public Health Nutrition (IPHN)
	Dr. Mohammad Mostafa Member (Public Health Nutrition) Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSa)
Panel Speakers	Dr. Monira Parveen Nutrition Officer, UNICEF Bangladesh
	Dr Malay Kanti Mridha Professor, BRAC JGP BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh
	S M Shaikat Executive Director, SERAC-Bangladesh
	Ummay Farihin Sultana Project Manager, Bangladesh Urban Health Network (BUHN)
Closing Remarks	Dr. Md. Shamim Hayder Talukder Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Eminence Associates for Social Development
Session Moderator	Maliha Khan Majlish Project Associate, Bangladesh Urban Health Network (BUHN)

Seminar Highlights:

SN	Order of Proceedings	Seminar Discussion
1	Welcome Speech	Dr. Margub Aref Jahangir , <i>Health Specialist (Urban), Health Section, UNICEF Bangladesh</i> , warmly welcomed the participants and emphasized the urgent need to tackle urban malnutrition through stronger nutrition-sensitive services within urban primary healthcare systems. He highlighted how integrated models — such as the UNICEF-supported Aalo Clinic — demonstrate effective, people-centered approaches to improving nutrition and health outcomes in rapidly growing urban areas.
2	Panel Discussion	Dr. Monira Parveen, <i>Nutrition Officer at UNICEF Bangladesh</i>, presented on the Mothers at Work initiative, a flagship program launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Employment to support maternity rights and promote breastfeeding and childcare for women in the RMG sector. A 2013 evaluation across 113 factories found high awareness of paid maternity leave but low use of breastfeeding spaces, breaks, and childcare facilities. Despite these gaps, the program proved economically beneficial, with an estimated return of \$12 per dollar invested. Recommendations included expanding the program beyond the RMG sector, strengthening monitoring, and improving daycare services to increase utilization by working mothers. S M Shaikat, <i>Executive Director of SERAC-Bangladesh</i>, highlighted the growing challenges of urban nutrition in Bangladesh, focusing on food insecurity and inequality, especially among street children. He advocated for a “smart fiscal policy with a human face” that discourages unhealthy consumption while making nutritious food affordable for low-income families and emphasized the role of young people as co-creators of solutions and the need to integrate nutrition into urban planning. He called for innovative policies, youth leadership, and civic compassion to transform Bangladesh into a South Asian role model for healthy, inclusive, and equitable cities.
3	Open Discussion and Q/A Session	During the open discussion session, Dr. Shahin Akter , <i>Technical Operation Director, Eminence Associates for Social Development</i> raised a question about potential conflicts between work targets and breastfeeding breaks. In response, Dr. Monira Parveen , <i>Nutrition Officer at UNICEF Bangladesh</i> , clarified that there were no widespread issues of wage deductions for taking breaks, noting that factories are now largely compliant with labor policies. She noted that while awareness of breastfeeding standards was relatively high (around 80–90%), actual utilization of lactation centers remained low.

4	Speech by Special Guests	As a special guest, Dr. Mohammed Eunus Ali, <i>Director of the Institute of Public Health Nutrition (IPHN)</i>, highlighted the pressing challenges in urban health and nutrition. He noted that urban areas face a shortage of structured facilities and trained human resources compared to rural settings. He also emphasized the importance of integrating urban health and nutrition services and shared plans to collaborate with the Bangladesh National Nutrition Council to strengthen policies and more effectively address urban health issues. Dr. Mohammad Mostafa, Member (Public Health Nutrition), Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA), highlighted the ongoing challenges in ensuring safe and nutritious food for urban populations, particularly among vulnerable and less privileged groups. He emphasized the critical importance of multi-sectoral collaboration, noting that improving food safety and nutrition requires coordinated efforts across government agencies, civil society, and the private sector. He also called for strengthening city-level implementation of food safety measures to protect public health.
5	Speech by the Chief Guest	As the chief guest, Dr. Md. Rizwanur Rahman, <i>Director General, Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC)</i>, focused on strategies to enhance urban nutrition, stressing the need to promote safe food systems and foster effective partnerships among stakeholders. He underscored that addressing food safety and nutrition challenges in cities is a shared responsibility, requiring collaboration between governments, communities, and private sector actors. He encouraged continuous efforts to create sustainable, nutrition-sensitive urban food environments that benefit all residents.
6	Closing remarks and next step	Dr. Md. Shamim Hayder Talukder, <i>Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Eminence Associates for Social Development and Member Secretary of BUHN</i>, thanked the speakers and participants for their valuable contributions and emphasized that food and nutrition are key to health in Bangladesh, especially given the double burden of disease. He noted that many non-communicable diseases are linked to dietary habits and food safety, and highlighted that this seminar provides guidance on working together to ensure proper nutrition for all.

Seminar Decisions/Recommendations:

1. Strengthen nutrition-sensitive urban primary healthcare services by scaling up integrated models that combine health, nutrition, and community outreach within city health systems.
2. Expand workplace nutrition and maternity-support initiatives, including breastfeeding spaces, daycare services, and awareness-building, beyond the RMG sector to all urban workplaces.
3. Improve food safety and urban nutrition governance through stronger city-level enforcement, coordinated action among government agencies, NGOs, and private sector actors, and better monitoring systems.
4. Develop inclusive urban food policies that make nutritious foods affordable for low-income families, discourage unhealthy consumption, and ensure equitable access for vulnerable groups, including street children.
5. Integrate nutrition considerations into urban planning, emphasizing youth leadership, civic engagement, and people-centered interventions to build healthier and more resilient cities.
6. Invest in capacity-building and infrastructure by increasing trained human resources, improving facility readiness, and strengthening partnerships to ensure sustainable, nutrition-sensitive urban environments.

Attendance Sheet of the Seminar:

Following attendees from ISUH, Government of Bangladesh - along with professionals, Academicians, UNICEF and other partner organizations' joined the virtual seminar-

SN	Name	Designation	Organization
1.	Ms. Camille Medema	Urban Health Research Collaborator	International Society for Urban Health
2.	Dr. Md. Rizwanur Rahman	Director General	Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC)
3.	Dr. Mohammed Eunus Ali	Director	Institute of Public Health Nutrition (IPHN)
4.	Dr. Mohammad Mostafa	Member (Public Health Nutrition)	Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA)
5.	Dr. Monira Parveen	Nutrition Officer	UNICEF Bangladesh
6.	Mr. S M Shaikat	Executive Director	SERAC-Bangladesh
7.	Dr. Margub Aref Jahangir	Health Specialist (Urban)	UNICEF Bangladesh
8.	Dr. Md. Shamim Hayder Talukder	Chief Executive Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
9.	Mr. Mohammad Amirul Islam	Deputy Manager	Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB)
10.	Ms. Quazi Baby	Executive Director	Participatory Development Action Program (PDAP)
11.	Dr. Nazia Rahman	Project Coordinator	Partners in Health and Development (PHD)
12.	Ms. Masuda Begum	Director (Health and Nutrition)	Nari Maitri
13.	Dr. Sadia Samrin Hridi	Field Officer (M&E)	UNFPA Bangladesh
14.	Mr. Md. Arif (Priyo) Billah	Senior Research Officer	icddr,b
15.	Mr. Faruk Ahmed	Chairperson	RDRS Board of Trustees
16.	Dr. Maleeha Sheefa	Consultant	UNICEF USA
17.	Mr. Nahidul Haque Nahin	Individual	Dhaka University
18.	Ms. Rabeya Akter Munmun	Finance and Admin Officer	SERAC-Bangladesh
19.	Ms. Sumaiya Akter	Volunteer Management Associate	SERAC-Bangladesh
20.	Ms. Shahina Yasmin	Program Lead	SERAC-Bangladesh
21.	Ms. Katha Mondal Dristi	Program Development Associate	SERAC-Bangladesh
22.	Ms. Lutfa Pathan	Project Manager	SERAC-Bangladesh
23.	Mr. Md. Enamul Haque Roni	Communication Officer	SERAC-Bangladesh
24.	Mr. Md. Emran Hossain	Deputy Director (Finance and Administration)	SERAC-Bangladesh

25.	Ms. Ruhayat Tasnim	MEL Officer	SERAC-Bangladesh
26.	Ms. Sapna Rani Mondol	Intern	SERAC-Bangladesh
27.	Mr. Mizanur Rahman Akanda	Communication and Outreach Officer	SERAC-Bangladesh
28.	Mr. Shaheen	Unknown	
29.	Ms. Sharmina		
30.	Dr. Shahin Akter	Technical Operation Director	Eminence Associates for Social Development
31.	Ms. Tanjina Farhana Upoma	UNV Health Officer	UNICEF Bangladesh
32.	Ms. Ummay Farihin Sultana	Senior Research and Knowledge Management Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
33.	Ms. Maliha Khan Majlish	Senior Technical & Development Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
34.	Mr. Md. Wahiduzzaman	Urban Health Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
35.	Mr. Md. Saddam Hossain	Senior Data Management Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
36.	Mr. Md. Neamul Islam	Business Development Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
37.	Mr. Abhijeet Kumar Singh	Research & Communication Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
38.	Mr. Abir Chowdhury	IT Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
39.	Mr. Md. Shoriful Islam	Graphic Designer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
40.	Mr. Minhajul Islam	Health and Development Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development

Snapshot of the Seminar:

