

4th Bi-weekly Knowledge Sharing Virtual Seminar Session

Date: March 24, 2025 (Monday)
Time: 10.00 AM - 11.30 AM BST(GMT+6)

Topic: Urban General Practitioner Services and Referral System

Seminar Minutes

The Bangladesh Urban Health Network (BUHN) successfully hosted its **4th Bi-Weekly Knowledge Sharing Virtual Seminar** on "Urban General Practitioner Services and Referral System" on March 24, 2025 (Monday), from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM BST (GMT+6) via Zoom. Moderated by *Maliha Khan Majlish, Project Associate at Eminence Associates for Social Development*, the session brought together key stakeholders to explore the development of a General Practitioner (GP) center system in Bangladesh. Discussions centered on the structure, facilities, and referral mechanisms of GP centers, along with the media's role in raising awareness about the system. The seminar highlighted the vital need for public awareness and intergovernmental coordination to establish an effective GP center system, with participants urging advocacy to address social and environmental health determinants through a multi-sectoral approach to strengthen urban primary healthcare, emphasizing collaborative efforts to enhance healthcare access and efficiency in Bangladesh.

Seminar Agendas:

- Welcome speech
- Presentation on "Ma Jaan: solving referral challenges for urban poor to access emergency obstetric and newborn care in Bangladesh"
- Panel discussion
- Open Discussion/ Q&A Session
- Speech by the Chief Guest
- Speech by the Session Chair
- Closing remarks and next step

Seminar Discussions:

SN	Discussion Points	Seminar Discussion
1	Welcome Speech	<i>Dr. Margub Aref Jahangir, Health Specialist (Urban) at UNICEF Bangladesh</i> , welcomed participants by emphasizing the critical role of the GP system in healthcare, acknowledging its implementation challenges, and highlighting its potential to address healthcare gaps if successfully executed.
2	Presentation on "Ma Jaan: solving referral challenges for urban poor to access emergency obstetric and newborn care in Bangladesh"	<i>Md. Azmal Hossain, a program analyst (urban health) at UNFPA</i> , presented "Ma Jaan: solving referral challenges for urban poor to access emergency obstetric and newborn care in Bangladesh" an adaptable Android application designed to address referral challenges for urban poor in accessing emergency obstetric and newborn care in Bangladesh by connecting midwives with drivers and referral sites for timely healthcare, while emphasizing affordability, accessibility, and the need for interoperability and continuous monitoring in digital health integration.

3	Panel Discussion	<i>Urban Health Specialist Md. Zahirul Alam Azad</i> highlighted the importance of understanding why people rely on pharmacies for treatment, stressing that implementing a GP system would be challenging without proper regulations, and called for discussions on whether it should apply to public or all hospitals while advocating for policy revisions, new strategies, and AI integration to enhance GP service effectiveness. <i>Mary Rashid, Deputy Director at Concern Worldwide</i>, highlighted the challenges in Bangladesh's urban primary healthcare system, stressing the need for a comprehensive approach, strategic guidance for sustainability post-project closure, effective collaboration between the MoLGRD&C and the MoHFW, strong leadership in defining health center tiers, a phased referral system implementation, and streamlined processes focusing on one or two unique systems. <i>Ima Akter, a researcher at icddr;b</i>, highlighted urban healthcare gaps and challenges, advocating for the GP system as a solution while emphasizing the importance of GP clinics, with icddr;b offering strong support in this regard. <i>Rashed Rabbi, President of the Bangladesh Health Reporters Forum</i>, emphasized the need for further research and discussion on the necessity of GP centers, the current state of urban healthcare without them, and future treatment plans to avoid wasteful government spending. <i>Tanvirul Islam, Senior Reporter at Dhaka Post</i>, highlighted the need for significant improvements in GP and referral systems, noting that 60% of urban residents use private healthcare due to slow government healthcare services, 65% are unaware of GP services, and coordinated public-private policies are essential for urban healthcare reform.
3	Open Discussion/ Q&A Session	<i>Dr. Md. Abdur Razzaqul Alom, National Consultant at UNICEF Bangladesh</i>, emphasized the need to strengthen the referral system by preventing tertiary-level bypass of primary treatment and advocated for a comprehensive, technology-enhanced approach to manage existing model efficiently from the outset. <i>Masuda Begum, Director (Health and Nutrition) at Nari Maitree</i>, said integrating the GP model and AI would be highly beneficial, advocated for creating comprehensive clinics, and emphasized the need for a comprehensive GP model. <i>Chandrasegarar Soloman, Health Manager at UNICEF Bangladesh</i>, expressed his happiness at attending BUHN's seminar, noting that Bangladesh's technological advancement serves as a strong example for other countries and should be leveraged to improve urban referral systems, while also appreciating BUHN's efforts in uniting diverse stakeholders to discuss critical issues amid the government's transformative health system reforms, where such expert insights can drive meaningful change. <i>Dr. Sabera Sultana, National Professional Officer at the World Health Organization (WHO)</i>, emphasized the necessity of further

		discussions and consultations with various stakeholders and policymakers, along with the government's highest-level commitment, to develop an urban health model structure and determine the leading ministry for urban health initiatives.
4	Speech by the Chief Guest	<i>Dr. Khairul Islam, Regional Director, WaterAid, South Asia and President of the Bangladesh Urban Health Network (BUHN), highlighted the importance of the GP-based health model in the upcoming Health Reform Commission's report, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to implement the referral system despite challenges, though its sustainability before the next government remains uncertain.</i>
5	Speech by the Session Chair	<i>Khondoker Md Nazmul Huda Shamim, Project Director of the Urban Primary Health Care Services Delivery Project-Phase 2, highlighted the ease of accessing doctors in Bangladesh, which strains the healthcare system and stressed the importance of digital health records and report acceptance, and urged an integrated approach to strengthen healthcare services.</i>
6	Closing remarks and next step	<i>Dr. Md. Shamim Haider Talukder, Chief Executive Officer of Eminence Associates for Social Development and Member Secretary of the Bangladesh Urban Health Network (BUHN), emphasized the need for the proposed GP and referral system to address non-communicable diseases (NCDs) exacerbated by population growth, stressing that primary healthcare alone is insufficient and urging local governments to lead on climate change, environmental, and social responsibility issues to ensure comprehensive healthcare access.</i>

Seminar Decisions:

1. Enhance coordination between the MoLGRD&C and MoHFW, along with NGOs, private sector, and media, to implement an effective GP and referral system while addressing social and environmental health determinants.
2. Expand tools like Ma Jaan for emergency obstetric care and integrate AI and interoperable digital health records to improve diagnostics, referrals, and patient management.
3. Clarify regulations on pharmacy dependence, define whether GP services apply to public or all hospitals, and revise policies to ensure structured primary healthcare with clear referral guidelines.
4. Launch nationwide campaigns to educate citizens on GP services, reduce reliance on unregulated pharmacies, and promote trust in public healthcare.
5. Ensure healthcare models like GP clinics and referral systems focus on affordability, accessibility, and addressing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) worsened by urbanization and climate change.
6. Establish continuous evaluation mechanisms for GP and referral systems, foster collaboration between public and private providers, and develop strategies to sustain initiatives beyond donor-funded projects.

Attendance Sheet of the Seminar:

Following attendees from BUHN, DGHS, MoLGRD&C, WHO, UNICEF and other partner organizations joined the virtual seminar-

SN	Name	Designation	Organization
1.	Khondoker Md Nazmul Huda Shamim	Project Director, Project Management Unit	UPHCSDP-2nd Phase
2.	Dr. Khairul Islam	Regional Director	Water Aid, South Asia Region
3.	Chandrasegarar Soloman	Health Manager	UNICEF Bangladesh
4.	Dewan Md Emdadul Hoque	Health Manager	UNICEF Bangladesh
5.	Dr. Margub Aref Jahangir	Health Specialist (Urban)	UNICEF Bangladesh
6.	Dr. Md. Abdur Razzaqul Alom	National Consultant	UNICEF Bangladesh
7.	Md. Azmal Hossain	Program Analyst- Urban Health	UNFPA
8.	Mary Rashid	Deputy Director, Programme Implementation and Impact	Concern Worldwide
9.	Dr Sabera Sultana	National Professional Officer	World Health Organization (WHO)
10.	Md. Abdul Hakim	Director (WASH)	Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK)
11.	Md Harun-or-Rashid	Chief Executive	Light House
12.	Md Jahirul Alam Azad	Urban Health Specialist	Individual
13.	Dr. Md. Shamim Hayder Talukder	Chief Executive Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
14.	Dr. Ziaul Ahsan	Project Director	Ipas Bangladesh
15.	Dr. Kamal Kanti Biswas	Project Manager, QFP	Ipas Bangladesh
16.	Rashed Rabbi	President	Bangladesh Health Reporter Forum (BHRF)
17.	Tanvirul Islam	Senior Reporter	Dhakapost
18.	Dr. Md. Saidur Rahman	Team Leader	PHD
19.	Fatema Showkot Jahan Rojy	Senior Deputy Director	Partners in Health and Development (PHD)
20.	Ema Aker	Research Investigator	icddr'b
21.	Md Arif Billah	Senior Research Officer	icddr,b
22.	Razib Mazumder	Research Investigator	icddr,b
23.	Masuda Begum	Director (Health and Nutrition)	Nari Maitree
24.	S.M. Mazibur Rahman	Executive Director	Socio-Economic and Rural Advancement Association (SERAA)
25.	Dr. Md. Saiful Islam	Medical Officer	P&R, DGHS
26.	M M Aeorangajeb Al Hossain	Medical Officer	DGHS
27.	Dr. Abu Jamil Faisel	Chairman & Treasurer	Health21

28.	VFF Mohammad Abdullah	Consultant	Individual
29.	Mujibul Haque Munir	Head of Social Development	RDRS Bangladesh
30.	Omar Faruk Akanda	Area Manager	Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)
31.	Dr. Momena Khatun	Health Technical Specialist	FSSP, Global Affairs Canada
32.	Sheikh Shahed Rahman	Consultant	Individual
33.	Arifa Akter		SERAA
34.	Tanjina Farhana Upoma	UNV Health Officer	UNICEF Bangladesh
35.	Dr. Shahin Akter	Technical Operation Director	Eminence Associates for Social Development
36.	Ummay Farihin Sultana	Senior Research and Knowledge Management Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
37.	Maliha Khan Majlish	Senior Technical & Development Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
38.	Md. Wahiduzzaman	Urban Health Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
39.	Dr. Md. Asifur Rahman	Health Manager	Eminence Associates for Social Development
40.	Mostafizur Rahman	Senior Program Implementation Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
41.	Md. Saddam Hossain	Senior Data Management Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
42.	Mohammad Mahtabuddin	Communication Manager	Eminence Associates for Social Development
43.	Md. Jahangir Alam	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (MEO)	Eminence Associates for Social Development
44.	Md. Dipta Saha	Health and Development Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
45.	Md. Sabith Hasan Khan	Health and Development Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
46.	Mash-oodur Rahman	Research & Communication Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
47.	Abhijeet Kumar Singh	Research & Communication Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
48.	Abir Chowdhury	IT Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
49.	Md. Shoriful Islam	Graphic Designer	Eminence Associates for Social Development

Snapshot of the Seminar:

