

5th Bi-weekly Knowledge Sharing Virtual Seminar Session

Date: May 08, 2025 (Thursday)
Time: 4.00 PM - 5.30 M BST(GMT+6)

Topic: Investment Opportunity for Urban Health

Seminar Minutes

On May 8, 2025, the Bangladesh Urban Health Network (BUHN) hosted its 5th Bi-Weekly Knowledge Sharing Virtual Seminar, "**Investment Opportunities for Urban Health**," via Zoom from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM BST (GMT+6). Moderated by *Ummay Farihin Sultana*, BUHN Project Manager, the session convened key stakeholders to discuss investment prospects in Bangladesh's urban healthcare sector. The seminar focused on the need for a comprehensive approach to tackle urban health challenges, emphasizing private sector investment potential, public-private partnerships, and improved coordination between MoLGRD&C and MoHFW. Experts underscored the importance of addressing social determinants of health, alongside discussing policies, planning, and opportunities to enhance urban healthcare investment.

Seminar Agendas:

- Welcome speech
- Presentation on "Investment Opportunities for Urban Health"
- 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. Fida Mehran, Health System Specialist at UNICEF Bangladesh</i> , thanked BUHN for organizing the webinar and emphasized that many poor urban residents face inadequate medical services due to administrative and resource gaps, financial constraints, and the need for increased government and private investment in primary healthcare, alongside more discussions on innovative financing following the withdrawal of some donor organizations from supporting integrated urban healthcare models.
2	Presentation on "Investment Opportunities for Urban Health"	<i>Dr. Rumana Haque, Professor at the University of Dhaka</i> , presented on investment opportunities for urban health in Bangladesh, highlighting challenges from rapid urbanization, including 41% urban population and 35% slum dwellers straining health services, high out-of-pocket expenditure (74%), a severe shortage of hospital beds (0.5 per 1,000), and the phasing out of donor-funded primary care by 2025, recommending increased health budgets, strategic purchasing, better provider salaries, scalable digital health, cost-benefit analyses, inclusive early warning systems, public-private partnerships, and replicating rural health structures to enhance primary healthcare access and quality for slum dwellers and low-income groups.
3	Panel Discussion	<i>Professor Dr. Mohammad Mainul Islam, Former Chairman of the Department of Population Sciences at the University of Dhaka</i> , stated that the continuously increasing urban population and the

		threat of climate change are impacting urban health and healthcare services, necessitating essential investment to maintain service quality. <i>Dr. Noor Mohammad, Executive Director of Population Services and Training Center (PSTC), highlighted that one-third of Bangladesh's slum population lacks healthcare access due to poor inter-ministerial coordination, rising non-communicable diseases from lifestyle changes, and underfunded primary healthcare, exacerbated by the suspension of the Shasthyo Surokhsha Karmasuchi (SSK) program, necessitating increased investment, better data integration, reduced out-of-pocket expenditure, and equitable healthcare planning.</i> <i>Dr. Bilkis Banu, Associate Professor at Independent University, Bangladesh, emphasized the need for a collaborative, comprehensive approach involving individuals, communities, healthcare providers, and policymakers to address urban health challenges caused by dense living conditions, advocating for sustainable health facilities and improved health data collection to inform digital health policies for better urban health outcomes.</i> <i>Urban health expert Md. Zahirul Alam Azad, emphasized the need for a coordinated public-private approach to facilitate private sector investment in Bangladesh's urban healthcare, similar to the garment sector, while highlighting the potential of digital healthcare infrastructure and telemedicine to enhance service access.</i>
4	Open Discussion/ Q&A Session	<i>Dr. Syed Kamrul Islam, Director (PHC & ITHC), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), emphasized the need to establish more service centers in urban areas, ensure door-to-door healthcare services, and arrange for digital health and telemedicine services.</i> <i>Dr. Md. Shamim Hayder Talukder, BUHN Member Secretary and CEO of Eminence Associates for Social Development, emphasized that substantial investment is crucial to maintain and enhance the quality of urban and upazila healthcare services in Bangladesh, advocating for modernized urban healthcare management, better coordination between MoLGRD&C and the MoHFW, replication of rural health structures in urban areas, and addressing social determinants like housing and food safety, while highlighting opportunities in establishing new primary healthcare centers, engaging community health workers, promoting digital health solutions, and strengthening future services through second-shift delivery.</i>

5	Speech by the Chief Guest	<i>Md. Mamunur Rashid, Joint Secretary (World Health Branch) at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, emphasized the critical role of private investment and public-private partnerships in strengthening Bangladesh's urban health system, highlighting the Health Sector Reform Commission's report, the need to reduce out-of-pocket expenditure, improve budget efficiency, and establish government-owned pharmacies, while acknowledging challenges in implementation due to financial and capacity constraints, and praising the Bangladesh Urban Health Network for aligning efforts to enhance health outcomes.</i>
6	Speech by the Session Chair	<i>Dr. Mohammad Zahirul Islam, Health Advisor at the Embassy of Sweden, urged the government to provide comprehensive support for investment in urban healthcare, emphasizing coordinated efforts to break the cycle of inadequate spending and address health determinants for economic development.</i>
7	Closing remarks and next step	<i>Dr. Md. Shamim Haider Talukder, CEO of Eminence Associates for Social Development and BUHN Member Secretary, thanked seminar distinguished guests and participants, expressed a commitment to collaborate for improved urban healthcare in Bangladesh, and notified that the ICUH 2025 conference will take place in New Zealand from November 17-21, with abstracts and presentations due by May 17.</i>

Seminar Decisions:

1. **Increase investment in urban primary healthcare** through diverse funding sources, such as government budgets, private sector contributions, and innovative financing mechanisms, to ensure sustainable services as donor support diminishes.
2. **Expand and improve urban healthcare infrastructure** by establishing more service centers, implementing door-to-door and digital health services, and adapting successful rural health models to enhance access and quality, particularly for slum dwellers and low-income groups.
3. **Reduce financial barriers to healthcare access** by introducing strategies like strategic purchasing, health insurance, and targeted subsidies to lower the high out-of-pocket expenditure (74%) faced by urban residents.
4. **Foster collaboration and coordination** among government ministries, private sector partners, and civil society to optimize resources, leverage expertise, and develop comprehensive urban health strategies.
5. **Invest in digital health technologies and data systems** to enhance service delivery, enable telemedicine, and provide robust data for evidence-based urban health policies.
6. **Address social determinants of health** through integrated urban planning that tackles housing, nutrition, and environmental factors, complementing healthcare investments for holistic health improvements.

Attendance Sheet of the Seminar:

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

SN	Name	Designation	Organization
1.	Mr. Md. Mamunur Rashid	Joint Secretary (World Health Wing)	HSD, MoHFW
2.	Syed Kamrul Islam	Director (PHC & ITHC)	DGHS, MoHFW
3.	Dr. Fida Mehran	Health Systems Specialist	UNICEF, Bangladesh
4.	Dr. Rumana Huque	Professor	Department of Economics, University of Dhaka
5.	Dr. Mohammad Zahirul Islam	Senior Programme Officer/Health Advisor	Embassy of Sweden
6.	Sainath Banerjee	Founder Director	Urban Plus Solutions
7.	Dr. Noor Mohammad	Executive Director	Population Services and Training Center (PSTC)
8.	Dr. Mohammad Mainul Islam	Professor & Former Chairman	Department of Population Sciences, University of Dhaka
9.	Dr. Bilkis Banu	Associate Professor	Department of Public Health Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)
10.	Farzana Munmun	Deputy Program Manager, Upazila Health Care	DGHS, MoHFW
11.	Md Jahirul Alam Azad	Urban Health Specialist	Individual
12.	Dr. Md. Shamim Hayder Talukder	Chief Executive Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
13.	Dr. Md. Saidur Rahman	Team Leader	PHD
14.	Md Harun-or-Rashid	Chief Executive	Light House
15.	Dr. Abu Jamil Faisel	Chairman & Treasurer	Health21
16.	S.M. Mazibur Rahman	Executive Director	Socio-Economic and Rural Advancement Association (SERAA)
17.	M M Aeorangajeb Al Hossain	Medical Officer	DGHS
18.	Zakera Hannan Rubayet	Project Manager	Population Services and Training Center (PSTC)
19.	Tanjina Farhana Upoma	UNV Health Officer	UNICEF Bangladesh
20.	Dr. Shahin Akter	Technical Operation Director	Eminence Associates for Social Development
21.	Ummay Farihin Sultana	Senior Research and Knowledge Management Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
22.	Maliha Khan Majlish	Senior Technical & Development Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development

23.	Md. Wahiduzzaman	Urban Health Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
24.	Md. Saddam Hossain	Senior Data Management Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
25.	Mohammad Mahtabuddin	Communication Manager	Eminence Associates for Social Development
26.	Md. Jahangir Alam	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (MEO)	Eminence Associates for Social Development
27.	Md. Dipta Saha	Health and Development Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
28.	Abhijeet Kumar Singh	Research & Communication Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development
29.	Abir Chowdhury	IT Officer	Eminence Associates for Social Development

Snapshot of the Seminar:

