

CONCEPT NOTE

Policy Dialogue

Urban Health and Private Sector Engagement

22 September 2025 | 10:30 AM to 01:00 PM

 Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)
Chameli House, 17 Topkhana Road, GPO Box 2883, Dhaka-1000 Bangladesh.



Why It Matters?

Urban health in Bangladesh presents significant challenges, with 41% of the population residing in urban areas¹ where primary healthcare (PHC) delivery remains fragmented and complex. This complexity stems from overlapping jurisdictions of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C)²⁻³, creating gaps in coordination and service quality. Despite efforts like the Urban Primary Health Care Service Delivery Project (UPHCSDP)⁴ and the Bangladesh Smiling Sun Franchise Program⁵, urban healthcare remains underfunded, heavily reliant on external support, and unsustainable without robust reforms.⁶ The private sector plays a dominant role in healthcare delivery in Bangladesh, operating approximately 60% of the healthcare system⁷, with 16,979 facilities and providing twice the number of hospital beds compared to government hospitals⁸. However, weak regulatory oversight has led to high out-of-pocket costs, which constitute 73% of total health expenditures, pushing millions into poverty each year⁹. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) hold potential to bridge these gaps, as seen in neighboring countries like India, where innovative PPP models in states like Kerala have strengthened healthcare access and affordability¹⁰. These activities Dialogue and roundtable discussion aim to enhance urban PHC services by integrating the private health sector within the health system framework, seeking to establish a sustainable urban healthcare model, aligning with the principles of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and ensuring access to quality healthcare for all.

Themes of the Dialogue

The Policy Dialogue on *Urban Health and Private Sector Engagement* will focus on two interrelated themes that are central to strengthening urban health governance and service delivery in Bangladesh:

Private Sector Engagement in Primary Healthcare Delivery

Recognizing the dominant role of private providers in urban healthcare, this theme will explore how the private sector can be more effectively engaged in delivering primary healthcare.

Equitable Access to Essential Drugs in Urban Health Systems

The barriers to equitable access to essential medicines, including issues of affordability, availability, and rational use with a particular focus on the most vulnerable groups.

Objectives of the Dialogue

1. **Explore strategies for engaging the private sector** in primary healthcare delivery, including models for collaboration, regulation, and innovation to improve coverage and service quality.
2. **Identify policy options to ensure equitable access to essential drugs**, particularly for underserved and vulnerable urban populations, by addressing issues of affordability, availability, and rational use.
3. **Generate actionable recommendations** for government, private sector, and development partners to foster sustainable partnerships in urban health service delivery.
4. **Promote evidence-based dialogue** that integrates national policies, global commitments (e.g., UHC, SDGs), and local realities to strengthen resilience and inclusiveness of the urban health system.

Who Holds the Keys to Urban Health Transformation?

Engaging the Right Sectors for Policy Dialogue

Expected Participating Sectors

The dialogue will bring together key stakeholders from the Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives; the Health Services Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; private donor organizations; private implementing organizations; public–private partnerships and local NGOs; private health service providers; the pharmaceutical sector; political leaders; academicians; and media and journalists.

Time Flow of Dialogue

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Registration and Snacks	30	Minutes
10:30 AM - 10:35 AM	Welcome Speech	05	
10:35 AM - 11:05 AM	Two Keynote Speech on Distinguished Topics	15+15	
11:05 AM - 12:10 PM	Speakers Speech Session	65	
12:10 PM - 12:30 PM	Speech by Special Guests	20	
12:30 PM - 12:40 PM	Speech by Chief Guest	10	
12:40 PM - 12:50 PM	Speech by Session Chair	10	
12:50 PM - 01:00 PM	Closing Remarks	10	
01:00 PM	Lunch	-	