

WITH a vision of 'A world where everyone enjoys the maximum potential of health', the James P Grant School of Public Health at BRAC University has made a significant mark in public health education in Bangladesh and in South Asia in general.

In South Asia, one of the first public health institutions was the school of Tropical Medicine, which was set up in Kolkata in 1922. After that, similar institutions soon began to appear in the region, but according to a WHO report, most of these schools in India and other South Asian countries failed to create major impact due to 'neglect, assignment of lowest priority, low prestige, poor quality of staff, and inadequate facilities such as transport and field practice areas'.

To integrate community experiences in public health education, the Rockefeller Foundation helped set up a few schools of public health in Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Zimbabwe and Vietnam. However, the number of such types of schools were much less compared to the demands.

To address the many problems that public health is facing, and to test new teaching/learning methodologies, BRAC, one of the largest development organizations in the world, set up a school of Public Health in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Named after the late executive director of UNICEF, the James P Grant School of Public Health is today breaking new ground in innovative teaching and in creating leaders for public health in developing countries.

During the formation of the school, BRAC collaborated with prestigious public health schools in developed countries including Johns Hopkins and Columbia Universities to develop the curriculum. Guest Professors from those schools also teach in some of the school's courses. "The idea of setting up the school grew from BRAC's continued effort in alleviating poverty in disadvantaged parts of the world," says Professor AMR Choudhury, Dean of the school.

The Program

Since its commencement in 2005, three batches of 77 participants from 14 countries have now graduated from the school through its Master of Public Health (MPH) programme. In the current acadmeic year, there are 12 students from 11 countries of Asia, Africa, Europe and North America and 18 students from Bangladesh. While some of the students from the earlier batches have continued on to doctoral-level studies, most are now back in their own countries and have taken up jobs in various government, donor agencies, media and non-governmental organizations.

Uniqueness of the program

The James P Grant School has several features which makes it stand apart from its counterparts.

1) It emphasises on both the *art* and *science* of public health. Apart from the MPH and the several other short courses that the school offers, the faculty members are involved in research on important issues that Bangladesh and other low-income countries face.