



Dissemination Workshop on Strengthening Family Planning through Advocacy: Learnings and Opportunities

Marie Stopes Bangladesh has been working in Bangladesh since 1988 with a mission that translates Children by Choice, not Chance. It has been providing high quality sexual and reproductive healthcare across the country and significantly contributing to the government's goal of reducing maternal and child deaths.

As a part of its mandates, since 2016 with the technical support of Advance Family Planning, Marie Stopes Bangladesh and its partners AVAS, Serac, Shushilan, and Team Associate have been implementing a project titled "Strengthening Family Planning through Advocacy" to strengthen government's health systems and infrastructure in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Directorate General of Family Planning and civil society organizations. The project is going to end, thereby sharing the project's achievements, learnings, and future directions to achieve Bangladesh's commitments to Family Planning 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Marie Stopes Bangladesh has organized an impact dissemination workshop on 10th December 2022. In the workshop, the Chief guest was Md. Saiful Hassan Badal, the honorable Secretary, of the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division; Dr. Ashrafi Ahmed, NDC, Additional Secretary, of the Medical Education, and Family Welfare Division; Abdus Salam Khan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; Shahin Islam, NDC, Director General, National Institute for Mass Communication; Mervyn Christian, Advance Family Planning, Senior Program Officer; Johns Hopkins, Bloomberg School of Public Health; Dr. Nurun Nahar, Line Director, CCSDP, DGFP and Dr. Mahmudur Rahman, Director, MCH unit, DGFP along with other respected guests.

At the beginning of the dissemination, Ms. Monjum Nahar, the Lead Advocacy, shared that Advance Family Planning (AFP) in collaboration with civil society organizations, family planning experts, and the Government of Bangladesh, worked together to achieve critical success using the SMART advocacy approach. They i) secured local funding for family planning; ii) expanded access to quality contraceptive services; iii) strengthened Bangladesh's commitment to accountability; iv) improved the visibility of family planning through media; and v) galvanized civil society



as a powerhouse.

Mr. Kishwar Imdad, Country Director, Marie Stopes Bangladesh expressed his gratefulness to all the respected guests. He said that Marie Stopes Bangladesh has been working since 1988 in Bangladesh to promote women's health and to ensure women's choices and rights. He thanked the Advance Family Planning, Johns Hopkins University for their support to Marie Stopes Bangladesh. Also, thanked the government officials for their cooperation. He said that MSB is committed to promoting gender equality by promoting women's and girls' choices and rights on their reproductive health issues.

Md. Saiful Hasan Badal, the Secretary of the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division, remarked that in Bangladesh, family planning has been one of the top priorities in the 4th Health Sector Programme as a path toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. He said that the Ministry has strengthened its efforts to increase trained service providers, including deploying midwives to all sub-district hospitals; improving supervision of family planning services by placing clinical teams in all districts; and engaging the private sector for addressing gaps in service provision and supply of commodities.

Additional Secretary, of Medical Education

and Family Welfare Division, MOHFW, Dr. Ashrafi Ahmed, NDC said that the AFP project contributed to creating scope to work jointly in a platform with GO/NGO/civil society for promoting the health rights of women. The project has demonstrated that organized collaboration of multi sectoral groups, leveraging the knowledge and skills of advocates, and an effective advocacy strategy, can contribute significantly to strengthening accountability.

Shahin Islam NDC, DG of the National Institute of Mass Communication mentioned that three issues are important for women empowerment- intellectual, mental, and physical strength. And to increase the physical strength of women, they need to take FP services. Therefore, it is important to increase access and availability of quality family planning services which AFP, MSB is doing.

Abdus Salam Khan, Joint Secretary, MOHFW said that they are working to reduce unmet needs, and dropout rates, and ensure institutional delivery. Model Union Health and Family Welfare centers provide 24/7 maternal care including institutional childbirth. The initiative is also helping to promote post-partum family planning. One of the priorities is for private-public partnerships to cover all the reproductive aged people, especially

women and girls of the country.

The initiative of the project to involve Private Medical College and Hospitals unlocked a new arena by opening FP corners for increasing FP access and gradually other medical colleges will replicate it- Ifrat Ara

Our Medical colleges and hospitals are willingly taking the challenge of setting up FP corners and successfully providing FP services. Prof. Dr. Sehereen F. Siddiqua, Head of Gynecology and Obstetrics and Laparoscopic Surgeon, Anwar Khan Modern Cardiac Hospital, hopes that other private medical colleges could take the supplementary role.

We know how to manage and secure local budgets for FP services from the UP. - Advocate Shahneyaj Mili, a District Advocacy working member.

MSB has contributed to changing some policies and procedures like approval of tubal hook, uterine elevators, laparoscopic approach, local anesthetic, infection-prevention guidelines for IUD, etc. Besides, an initiative for the development of an FP strategy for hard-to-reach areas will create more access to contraceptives where people lack access to services. Dr. Nurun Nahar, Line Director, CCSDP, DGFP

Dr. Prof. Ainoon Naher, Jahangir Nagar University says he has found the approach

for advocacy is unique to influence decision makers as it is evidence and solution based. He hopes the social advocate will be benefited by using the SMART advocacy too.

Mervyn Christian, Senior Program Officer at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore said that AFP's achievements on policy and programmatic advances to improve the quality of care and expanding the availability of family planning services in hard-to-reach areas are evidence of AFP's strong partnership with government and civil society and the government's commitment to ensure quality family planning services for all. He thanked the government officials, and civil society organizations for their support of the project.

Quazi Mohiul Islam, Former DG, DGFP said that family planning is one of the pre-conditions to reduce maternal death and is key to leading a healthy life. It is not about only contraception, rather it is a lifestyle.

FROM THE LEARNING OF THE ADVOCATES AND EXPERTS, THE PROJECT GAVE SOME CRITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO TAKE FURTHER ACTIONS

- Prioritize family planning issues within health and development with a focus on Bangladesh's FP2030 and SDG 2030 goals.
- Implement geographically targeted service packages (including behavior change communications campaigns and contraceptive delivery) for low-performing upazilas within low-performing regions, chars, and coastal areas.
- Expand task-sharing initiatives by involving nurses to mitigate the shortage of skilled human resources to provide family planning services.
- Strengthen partnerships, especially with the private sector, that can help the public sector to reach the current demand for quality family planning services.
- Strengthen the monitoring system and improve the coordination between national and subnational family planning departments.
- Increase dialogue between donors and the Government to enable a mutual understanding of priorities and possibilities.

NEWS

Chinese FM

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The meeting with the foreign minister will not be a formal one, but some issues of bilateral relations may come up, the official said.

Qin, who was Chinese ambassador to the US, will visit Ethiopia, Gabon, Angola, Benin and Egypt from January 9 to 16. China's foreign ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a daily media briefing on Monday.

This is Qin's first foreign trip.

ACC can look

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The MD said people whose interests were harmed because of his "reform initiatives" at the Dhaka Wasa were behind the newspaper report.

Taqsem said the ACC was not conducting an investigation against him, it was rather probing appointment of directors to the Wasa board.

"There is no link between the ongoing investigation and this [assets in the US]."

Meanwhile, ACC Chairman Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah told The Daily Star that the commission would seek information about Taqsem's wealth in the US.

"We will write to the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit [BFIU] about his wealth in the US. The BFIU will take further measures," he said.

Three enquiries against Taqsem are now pending with the commission, the ACC chief said. "The new allegations will be added to the enquiries. There is no need to conduct another enquiry."

Mystery of why

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job because they really made careful effort when choosing and processing materials," said study author Admir Masic, an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"Scholars wrote down precise recipes and imposed them on construction sites (across the Roman Empire)," Masic added.

The new finding could help make manufacturing today's concrete more sustainable, potentially shaking up society as the Romans once did.

Police high-ups

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authorities suspended Fakhrul Islam, sub-inspector of Bakalia Police Station, and Md Kamal, assistant sub-inspector of Akbar Shah Police Station, after they were found involved in the narcotics trade.

On September 6 last year, police arrested Mahbubul Alam, an assistant sub-inspector of Pallabi Police Station, and two informants -- Md Rubel and Sohel Rana -- on charges of falsely implicating a man in a drug case by sneaking yaba pills into his pocket in Dhaka's Cantonment Railway Station area.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Md Monzur Rahman, assistant inspector general of the PHQ, reiterated that the police chief urged all officials to ensure that no one is involved in the drug trade.

At Saturday's conference, IGP Mamun directed the officials to work unitedly for the force's image.

He also suggested the senior officers increase their involvement in using technology and traditional methods, along with the digital procedure, for investigation, sources said.

The IGP asked the officials to give priority to policing before all else.

DB arrests

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Double Mooring Police Station in Chattogram. Nur and Sarowar were accused in this case too.

Kuddus in the case said he found posters, demeaning S Alam Group, on walls and pillars behind Nafi Tower in Gulshan-1 and its adjacent areas on December 22.

Founded in 1985 by Muhammad Saiful Alam Masud Chowdhury, S Alam Group is one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh. It has been in the news recently for its alleged borrowing of over Tk 30,000 crore from Islami Bank, where it has 26.73 percent stakes. The amount was way beyond the group's entitlement, prompting Bangladesh Bank to appoint observers at the bank.

However, State Minister Zakir Hossain could not be reached for comments despite repeated attempts.

Metro Rail

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meeting on Sunday held after 10 days of metro rail operation.

During the first 10 days, around 90,000 passengers used the service, earning the authority around Tk 88 lakh, the DMTCI MD said.

He added that 7,250 multiple-use MRT passes and 83,000 single-journey cards were sold during this time.

On December 28, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated MRT Line-6 from Uttara to Agargaon, which opened to the public the following day.

Asked about the fully-fledged operation, MAN Siddique said they were still hopeful about meeting their target of having all nine stations of the section operational by March 26.

He went on to say that they already had enough resources to execute the fully-fledged operation but decided to gradually increase the number of stations so people can get habituated to the new mode of transport.

The DMTCI would need Tk 1,000 crore annually to cover the operational and depreciation costs, and to pay the loan instalments.

To achieve this goal, it needs to earn Tk 3 crore per day, which it anticipates it will be able to do once the entire line is up and running.

However, the official said that fare revenue would cover only 65 percent of the cost, with the remaining 35 percent coming from station plazas and transit-oriented development (TOD).

TOD is a type of urban development that maximises the amount of residential, business, and leisure space within walking distance of public transport. In doing so, TOD aims to increase public transport ridership by reducing the use of private cars and by promoting sustainable urban growth.

Meanwhile, the construction work for the extension of the metro rail from Motijheel to Kamalapur started on Saturday, he added.

On January 2, the DMTCI sent an invitation to the prime minister to inaugurate the physical work of MRT Line 1, the country's first underground metro rail, in the last week of this month.

US, Bangladesh hold talks

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told this correspondent.

Laubacher, who visited Rohingya camps on Sunday, lauded Bangladesh for sheltering the Rohingyas and stressed on expanding education and livelihood options for them.

Foreign Secretary Masud told her that security situation in the Rohingya camps is deteriorating and it could turn out to be a security issue and so an urgent solution to this crisis is needed.

He appreciated the US for supporting the resolutions in the UN related to the Rohingyas and for recognising the Rohingya genocide.

The other members of the visiting US delegation include Colonel Brian Luti, director for South Asia Regional Affairs at the National Security Council; Scott Urbom, office director for Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka in the South-Central Asia Bureau; Helen LaFave, deputy chief of mission; and Arturo Hines, chief of political section of the US embassy in Dhaka.

They also attended a discussion with officials of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said Dhaka welcomes constructive engagement of the US.

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu, will visit Dhaka this month. Two other officials, including a top official from USAID, are also likely to visit Dhaka.

"This is very positive. We have multifaceted relationship with the US. We want to advance our relations and these visits are part of it," he told journalists at the foreign ministry.

"If there is any weakness, they will tell us officially. We will resolve it," he said when journalists asked about US concerns about the human rights, calls for fair elections and freedom of the press.

Momen said Bangladesh and the US believe and pursue the same values and principles like democracy and respect for human rights.

He said there were US concerns over the Digital Security Act and measures were taken to rectify it.

He said there has been no excesses by the Rab for many years. Actions were taken duly in any case of excesses as the force matured over the years and they have an inbuilt accountability system. "We don't want to see any injustice anywhere."

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said Bangladesh wants the US and their allies to disown the political parties that support militancy and terrorism.

He said Bangladesh has paid heavy price of the Holey Artisan terrorist attack and the response and reaction from the law enforcers were applauded by the US and its allies. They and their allies also disowned the political parties that shelter and promote militancy.

"We hope that the countries will continue that policy and would not shelter any killers," Shahriar told reporters at the foreign ministry.

He brushed away any possibility of sanctions when asked about the foreign secretary's December 31 letter to the Bangladesh missions abroad.

The letter asked the Bangladeshi diplomats to be highly alert to block any sanctions.

Earlier, Shahriar said there were some misunderstandings with the US. The government is working on withdrawing the US sanctions. Therefore, some people are overenthusiastic about the relationship with the US.

"Therefore, the BNP-Jamaat is trying to fish in the troubled waters," he said.

The BNP expected another sanction on December 9-10 last year and called a public meeting on that day, he said, adding that this is a proof how dependent they are on lobbyists and propaganda machine.

"One has to come to power with public support, not with foreign support. For the time being, some may benefit but it is not permanent," Shahriar said.