

Improving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Dhaka Project

NEWSLETTER

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Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

Overview

Ipas Bangladesh and four implementing partner organizations- Obstetrical and Gynecological Society of Bangladesh (OGSB), Association for Prevention of Septic Abortion, Bangladesh (BAPSA), Reproductive Health Services Training and Education Program (RHSTEP), and SERAC-Bangladesh, have been implementing the Improving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Dhaka Project funded by Global Affairs Canada through HealthBridge Foundation, Canada. The five-year project (2021-2025) aims to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights of underserved women and adolescents living in urban Dhaka. The project has been collaborating with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C) and closely working with the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Dhaka North and South City Corporations, Urban Primary Health Care Services Delivery Project (UPHCSDP), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), and General Practitioners (GPs) Physicians.

By the end of 2nd year, the project made significant progress working with community and stakeholders including GPs, community volunteers, UPHCSDP, DGFP, and BKMEA.

This newsletter covers the update and progress of the project from its initiation to the end of Year-2 (March 2023).

Health System Interventions

To ensure high-quality FP, MR and PAC services for the community, Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project, through the implementing partner, OGSB (Obstetrical and Gynecological Society of Bangladesh) organized technical training on FP, MR and PAC for general practitioners (GP) from the project areas under Dhaka North and South City corporations. Till March 2023, the project selected 68 GPs as per eligible criteria, organized training for them, ensured necessary FP-MR-related commodity and logistic supplies to these GP chambers, and continued follow-up of GP service as part of strengthening the health system. These initiatives of the project are improving access to quality SRH services by the underserved women and adolescents living in low socio-economic areas of urban Dhaka.



Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

Practical session on IUD insertion at training session for GPs
Photo credit: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

During the training session, OGSB shared updated technical information based on the national curriculum and ensured hands-on practices by the participants. After the training, the project continued to provide essential medical equipment, logistics and FP commodities to the trained GPs to ensure uninterrupted SRH services. The project technical team conducted supportive supervision of the trained GPs to ensure quality SRH service delivery in the community. The visiting team reviewed the quality of GP's SRH service record keeping on digital tablets and status of logistic stock and clinical services. This initiative ensures uninterrupted supply of FP commodities to the GP chamber and enhanced GP's skills through on the job mentoring where necessary.



Signage of GP Chambers

After completion of the GP trainings, the project supported the branding of the GP chambers with different signages. The project developed a logo for the GP chambers named as " Women Plus" with a tagline of "Safe Reproductive Health Service Center" for the community. Indoor and outdoor materials including signboards, stickers, posters, screen messages carried GP's name, qualification, service time and chamber address that helped the community to easily recognize the chamber and available services there. Till March 2023, a total 38 GP chambers were branded with project supported signages.



Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

A GP chamber branded with Women Plus signage and messages.
Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

Strengthen the URBAN Health Facilities



Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

The Project initiated capacity building training for clinical providers, onsite support and ensured uninterrupted supply of logistics and commodities at 10 referral facilities and 20 UPHCSDP clinics to improve the availability and accessibility to quality SRH services. Through year 2, implementing partner RHSTEP successfully conducted 16 batches of training on comprehensive menstrual regulation (MR), post abortion care (PAC) and family planning. A total 158 clinical providers were trained including 86 doctors, and 72 mid-level providers. Through this training and facility readiness initiative of the project, the quality of MR-PAC services has improved in these facilities, and performance increased as per service record. The project is continuing to follow up and monitor these facilities and provided need based on site support and skill up training.

Mentoring and follow up session during training. Photo credit: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project



Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project is working to promote zero tolerance against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and address the violence faced by women and adolescents including female garments workers living in Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj. We aim to utilize an intersectional gender lens to address GBV and Reproductive Coercion (RC) and promote gender equitable access to quality health services.

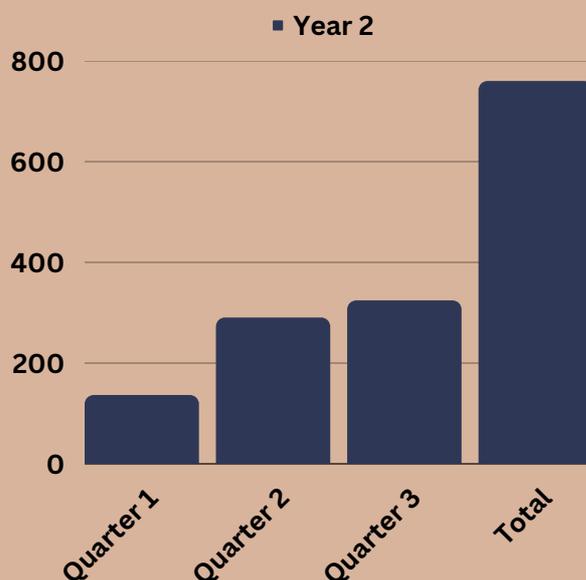
The project interventions help increase awareness among women and adolescents, improve supportive attitude of the service providers, key stakeholders, and community towards SGBV survivors creating an enabling environment for addressing GBV cases, increase service-seeking behavior and access to services with effective referrals and reporting mechanisms. In the reporting period the project trained training on SGBV identification, referral and reporting was provided to:

- Developed a resource pool of 30 trainers on GBV and RC counseling
- Trained 75 urban health workers from 30 UPHCSDP clinics and 12 referral centers
- Trained 68 General Practitioners
- Oriented 570 community volunteers.



Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

ToT on Gender Based Violence for outreach workers of UPHCSDP.



Reported cases of SGBV from July 2022 to March 2023

IUCD, a long-acting reversible contraceptive service initiated by project paramedics in urban health center contributing to prevention of unintended pregnancies of women in low socio-economic urban areas.

Unintended pregnancies, ending up with unsafe abortion and chronic complications is high among underserved women in urban Dhaka. Long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) is a proven effective method to prevent unintended pregnancies for a long period. Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project deployed paramedics at 20 selected clinics of Urban Primary Health Care Services Delivery Project (UPHCSDP) to provide menstrual regulation (MR), postabortion care (PAC), and LARC services to prevent unintended pregnancies among underserved women, especially living in low-socio economic areas in urban Dhaka.



Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

Counseling session on PPIUCD at CRHCC by Rani Akhter.
Photoedit: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

Rani Akhter, recruited as a paramedic of Improving SRHR Dhaka project received a 14-day comprehensive training on family planning, MR & PAC services from the project. She was deployed in August 2022 at the Comprehensive Clinic of UPHCSDP run by BAPSA at Aga Sadek area under Dhaka South City Corporation. Within three months of her joining, Rani Akhter started post-partum family planning (PPFP) counselling and successfully provided five IUCD (intra uterine contraceptive device) services to the clients. “After joining here, I found a huge scope of providing long term family planning services to the clients. Most of the women do not get proper counseling on family planning services after delivery. Many of them get pregnant again that they do not intend. I started counselling them, and they received IUCD services.” Said, Rani Akhter.

The clinic had no record of IUCD service of PPFP for the last one year due to lack of trained service providers. With the deployment of trained paramedic Rani Akhter, the clinic has been providing IUCD services to the clients who are highly satisfied to having that service.

“Like Rani Akhter, we have deployed 20 paramedics at 20 UPHCSDP clinics through one of our partner organizations, BAPSA. These paramedics are proving quality MR, PAC and family planning services to the clients. The women who are receiving IUCD services, are protected from unintended pregnancies for 10 years and can avoid health complications followed by unsafe abortion.” Said, Dr. Ziaul Ahsan, Project Manager, Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project, Ipas Bangladesh

Youth and Community Engagement on SRHR Issues



Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project engages youth volunteers to increase awareness and demand of SRHR services, specifically of menstrual regulation (MR), postabortion care (PAC), family planning (FP) and address gender-based violence (GBV) among underserved adolescents, youth, and women in Dhaka.

As of March 2023, a total of 580 youth volunteers (out of 1000 as planned by the project period) have already been capacitated through orientation and trainings. After the orientation, the youth volunteers formed community action groups (CAGs) to create awareness among the community and an enabling environment for accessing SRHR services by the women and girls. The youth volunteers held networking meetings with general practitioners (GPs) who were priorly selected and trained by the project. The networking meetings enhanced coordination among volunteers and GPs and established linkages between community and service facilities that provide SRH services. The volunteers conducted awareness sessions with adolescents, women and men in the community and provided accurate information on SRHR issues and nearest service facilities to them. Till March 2023, the volunteers conducted 178 community sessions where 2,136 adolescents, women and men participated which helped increase community awareness, create demand of SRH services and reduce social stigma relating to FP-MR-PAC services and SGBV issues.

Telling stories through photographs termed as "Photovoice" is a focused intervention of the project. Volunteers and community people are capacitated to explore SRHR issues in the community, capture photos and create stories to share. The first batch of "photovoice" workshop has been arranged on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) issues. A total of 13 volunteers participated in the workshop who were exposed to the photography technique, storytelling and collecting gender-based violence related cases. The collected stories, photographs on SGBV issues will be reviewed and documented to prepare tools to be used in exhibitions, media events and advocacy.

Photovoice and Social Media Initiative



Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

The project developed a Facebook page named "projonon shastho bondhu" (প্রজনন স্বাস্থ্য বন্ধু) and an Instagram account to connect the youth volunteers, their peers and community members. The volunteers contributed to creating contents for the Facebook page and posted SRHR related messages and information regularly supporting to get reach of community people and stakeholders. As of March 2023, the Facebook page hit around 8,700 people reach, and engagement of 3,300 population. The project developed a strategy and guideline for social media use.

Partnership, Coordination and Collaboration

Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project is designed with public private partnership (PPP) model for smooth implementation of its interventions and improvement of SRHR situation. The project has made multiple partnerships and collaborations with government, NGOs, and private organizations to ensure quality SRHR services for the underserved population living in urban areas of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur districts. From its initiation, the project has been maintaining coordination and collaboration with DGFP, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC), Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BKMEA) and partner NGOs of Urban Primary Health Care Service Delivery Program (UPHCSDP).



[MoU signing between Ipas Bangladesh and BKMEA]

Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

The project has made an MOU with UPHCSDP, the largest health service delivery project in urban areas which is led by Ministry of Local Government. Based on MoU and project work plan, Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project has trained and capacitated the service providers of UPHCSDP to provide quality FP, MR, PAC and SGBV services for the community.

Dhaka South City Corporation, Dhaka North City Corporation, and Narayanganj City Corporation are important stakeholders of Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project, for playing important role in project implementation. Chief Health Officers of DSCC and DNCC as well as Health officers and Assistant Health officers always provide their technical assistance and guidance to the project.

The project also made an MoU with BKMEA to strengthen MR, PAC, FP and SGBV service provisions of health facilities at their garment factories by providing training and logistic supports. This initiative aims to improve accessibility and availability of SRHR services for the garment workers.

Partnership and coordination added great value to the project implementation, and it is expected that this approach will be effective and successful in achieving the project goal.

16 Day celebration

The 16 Days Campaign against GBV 2022 has been observed by the project at the national and organizational levels. The global theme was ‘UNITE to End Gender-Based Violence’ and the national theme was ‘Let’s get all united to end violence against women and girls the key event was a joint Sharing Session with DSCC, DNCC, UPHCSDP and UPHCSDP’s 10 Project Areas. The Chief Health Officer (CHO) of DSCC chaired the sessions and the Project Director of



Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

Meeting with UPHCSDP stakeholders

UPHCSDP was the Chief Guest along with relevant 10 Health Officers of DSCC and DNCC; 10 Project Managers of and 10 Counselors from 10 CRHCCs. The objective of the sharing was to make the service providers aware about GBV, and relevance of 16 days campaign; and also expected roles and responsibilities from the UPHCSDP service providers in relation to Violence against women (VAW), promote gender sensitive services to the clients of UPHCSDP clinics i.e the underserved women and adolescents’ girls; refer to the required services and contribute in improving the GBV case reporting.

SERAC Bangladesh has supported community volunteers to observe the 16 days campaign against gender-based focusing on violence against women through community campaigns by youth leaders and volunteers. The volunteers at CAG and youth leaders have observed this event in 38 locations of Dhaka North and South City Corporation areas. Reporting on SGBV cases has increased every quarter in the reporting period. A total of 760 SGBV cases were reported from the period of July 2022- March 2023 with a gradual increase of reports from 136 to 290 to 334. These dates reflect an improved environment to share SGBV faced by the survivors. This is a result of training on SGBV identification, referral and reporting provided to 30 UPHCSDP clinics, 12 referral centers, 68 General Practitioners to support SGBV survivors in health facilities; and 570 community volunteers for mass awareness and enabling environment to improve awareness and service seeking behaviour at the community.



Photo: Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project

Overall Progress

Till the end of Year-2 (March 2023), Improving SRHR in Dhaka Project made significant progress of its planned activities:

- The project has initiated MR, PAC and FP services at 11 referral health centres, 28 UPHCSDP clinics (10 CRHCC & 18 PHCCs) and through 68 General Practitioners (GPs) in Dhaka division.
- The project trained 137 doctors including 68 GPs, and 72 mid-level providers including 28 project paramedics deployed at UPHCSDP clinics on comprehensive MR, PAC and Family planning services.
- A total of 770 MR, 3709 post-abortion care and 42,967 family planning services have been provided during Jan-Dec'22 period.
- The project trained 51 outreach workers from 10 PHCC on Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) and gender-based violence (GBV).
- The project trained 15 counsellors on gender-based violence and reproductive coercion (RC). During Jul-Dec'22 period, 421 GBV cases has been reported by the UPHCSDP clinics, referral centres and GPs; Among which majority cases were Psychological and physical violences.
- The project has completed facility planning assessment visits at 08 garment factory clinics at Narayanganj and Gazipur districts and planned to build capacity of these clinics



Improving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Dhaka



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