

EDITORIAL

Community Clinic: Reach to Unreached Population

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Bangladesh, a South Asian low-middle-income economy, has experienced a demographic and epidemiological transition with rapid urbanization and a gradual increase in life expectancy. It is the eighth most populous country in the world.¹ The current population of Bangladesh is 168,081,124 as of Friday, July 29, 2022, based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data² and population of the country is expected to be nearly double by 2050.³

Bangladesh is suffering from reduced doctor to patient ratio, which is only 5.26 to 10,000, that places the country at second position from the bottom, among the South Asian countries, according to the WHO. The doctor-patient ratio in other South Asian countries are, 7.77 in India, 9.75 in Pakistan, 9.5 in Sri Lanka, 6.5 in Nepal, 8.6 in Myanmar, and 22.3 in Maldives. Only Bhutan is placed behind Bangladesh in maintaining the ratio. Bhutan has 3.7 doctors to every 10,000 population, WHO data states.⁴

But according to The Lancet, Bangladesh is improving, and is currently ahead of India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Afghanistan in providing access to quality healthcare to citizens. According to The Lancet study, Bangladesh ranked 133rd among 195 countries in providing access to quality healthcare, and fell behind Sri Lanka and China in these areas.⁴ Table: 1 (secondary data from DGHS Bangladesh) shows the current health sector situation in Bangladesh.

Indicators of the Health and Family Planning Sector

Health Services Provision	Strength
Total no. of government hospitals under DGHS	739
No. of non-government hospitals and Clinics (Regd, by DGHS)	5321

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No. of beds under DGHS (functioning)	54660
No. of beds in private sector Facilities (Regd, by DGHS)	91537
No. of registered physicians (MBBS & BDS)	111413
Doctors working under DGHS per 10000 people	1.55
Doctors working under other ministries	-
Doctors working in private sector	-
Doctors under DGHS	25594
Doctors under DGFP	-
Registered diploma nurses	48001
No. of registered dental surgeons	9875

Source: DG of Health Service, Health Bulletin, 2019.

Bangladesh was one of the countries who signed the "Alma-Ata Declaration" in 1978 with a pledge to ensure "Health for All" (HFA) by 2000 through Primary Health Care (PHC).⁵

Although with the above scenario it is a challenging issue for Bangladesh to serve the marginalized population, but nothing is miracle, with a visionary leader of Bangladesh. The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman introduced the concept of community clinic to reach primary health care at the grassroots level of the newly independent country.

In order to implement the dream of the Father of the nation, the first community clinic of the country was inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Patgati of Tungipara in Gopalganj district on April 26 in 2000.⁶

At present there are about 14,127 community clinics across the country. Community clinic has taken multifaceted steps to bring healthcare to the doorsteps of the people and to ensure primary health care at the grassroots level. Community health care providers are currently delivering health, family welfare and nutrition services to the marginalized people.⁷

A study about community clinic (CC) conducted by showed almost all (97%) CCs are located in easy-to-reach area.⁸ Lands of the CCs are donated by respective communities and infrastructures are made by local government. The security of most of the CCs (93.7%) is maintained by community people. Cleanliness of the CCs is maintained by the cleaners or ayas who are appointed by local communities. Benefits of CCs as perceived by service users included free drugs (82.1%), free treatment (81.2%), easy access (76.3%), need-based health services (75.0%), and immunization services (68.6%). Almost all (99.0%) of the CC service users opined that CGs are involved in management of CC activities.

Community clinics have emerged as a flagship programme of the Government of Bangladesh aiming at making health services available to the rural people. During this Covid-19 pandemic, services provided by community clinic has recognised by WHO in newsletter on 24 October 2021 and they told “*Bangladesh: Community health workers at the heart of a stronger health system and the fight against COVID-19*”

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