

# REPORT

## Media Dialogue on Journalism in Essential Health Care Services

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**Organize by: USAID-DFID NGO Health Service Delivery Project**

**23 April, 2015**



*“Journalism in Essential Healthcare Services”*

A Media Dialogue on Journalism in Essential Health Care Services was held at the Seminar Hall of the Daily Star Center on 23rd April 2015 under the auspices of United States



Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) for the NGO Health Service Delivery Project (NHSDP). In the dialogue, a total of 31 senior level journalists from the groups of Editors, Head of News, News Editors, Chief Reporters, National Desk Editors and Health Bit Reporters of leading print and electronic media were present to share their

valuable opinion and experiences. Matiur Rahman, Editor of Daily Manobzamin presided over the meeting while Ms. Marietou Satin, Deputy Director OPHNE, USAID-Bangladesh; Ms. Marinda Bekman, CoR for NHSDP USAID-Bangladesh; Dr. Halida H. Akhter, Chief of Party, NHSDP along with the NHSDP Technical Leads, SH NGO Project Directors, Project Managers were also present in the media dialogue. Joint participation of the journalists and the



program persons reached at more than 100 participants attended the dialogue event. Mr. Kamrul Hassan Monju, Executive Director of Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) and Dr. Najmul Hossain, Deputy Chief of Party (SD), NHSDP jointly moderated the session.

Purpose of the media dialogue was to have an open dialogue with the media people, share essential health services provided by Smiling Sun network in line with national priorities and discuss about their role to address social issues like health, as a potential force for changing people's behavior and disseminating the issues among mass people specially the poor and underprivileged groups who can attain better primary health services to bring positive changes in their life.

Smiling Sun network of nearly 400 health clinics and more than 7,000 community service providers deliver essential health services at the door step for the poorest people to serve approximately 24 million people each year throughout Bangladesh. The event brought together community health experts and media professionals to discuss the approach taken by NHSDP's Smiling Sun health clinics in reaching poor communities with basic healthcare. The event also provided a platform to talk about Bangladesh's progress in improving overall health and identify the various roles of government, NGOs and media in addressing continuing health challenges.

The dialogue began with self introduction following which Dr. Halida H. Akhter, Chief of Party, NHSDP welcomed the participants and provided a brief on NHSDP service delivery and overview of Surjer Hashi clinics. She also explained how Surjer Hashi clinics contributing to

national health service delivery program in the rural and urban areas. Ms. Marietou Satin, Deputy Director OPHNE, USAID-Bangladesh shared the expectations of USAID from the NHSDP in complementing GOB's health service delivery program and mentioned that USAID globally has given maternal and child mortality as priority issue.



Mr. Shafiqur Rahman, Director-BCC, NHSDP explained the objectives of the Media Dialogue. He mentioned that the Media Dialogue is aimed utilizing the power of mass media in creating public awareness and public confidence in the health service delivery sector. NHSDP expect journalists to visit their clinics in way to have better understanding of current health issues and overall contribution of Surjer Hashi network toward the government of Bangladesh's health service delivery programs, providing information to the people about the quality and equitable service affordable for all, specially for the poor and underprivileged groups, and also to build local and national level partnership with media for the effective dissemination of health services news, information and other information.

After explaining the objectives of the dialogue, there were five presentations on uniqueness of NHSDP services made by 5 Project Directors of SH NGO network. The presentations were on interventions of NHSDP on :

- i) *Promoting birth preparedness* to prevent 3 delays to save lives of mothers & newborns; ii) promoting *Mayer bank and red flag icon* for pregnant mothers to empowering them and creating supportive environment for their safe delivery; iii) *Tin Diner Pahara*; a special initiative on community involvement in saving lives of mothers and neonates from onset of labor pain up to 3 days of delivery; iv)



*Reaching of poor*: to reach the underserved population especially the poor of the community and v) *Adolescent coverage*: approach to access unmarried adolescents with information and counseling service on Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health. They explained how they have used campaigns to educate people about simple interventions like visiting clinics for regular check-ups to save lives of pregnant mothers and giving birth under supervision of skilled medical staff.

In discussion and question answer session Shishir Moral, Chief of Health Bit and Deputy Chief Reporter, Daily Prothom Alo generates a discussion on journalist's views and responsibilities on reporting essential health care services. In the dialogue positive collaboration between the media and NGO's has been emphasized for better health care services. As the discussion evolved senior journalists opined that, media can report positive aspects of health





sector progress and also can critique the irregularities and highlight the area need improvement to serve the community with essential health care service. Some shared their personal experiences and barriers they came across while reporting on health issues. Being informed about the activities of the project, they also suggested several recommendations as listed below;

- Capacitate health bit journalists through workshops and trainings
- Hold workshops and trainings at regional level to capacitate regional/local level journalist on health issues
- Inform and involve local journalists about the activity of Surjer Hashi clinics
- Arrange consultation meeting with national desk to increase the flow of news related to essential health care services
- Increase publicity and visibility of the Surjer Hashi clinics both in print and electronic media
- Facilitate journalists to access Surjer Hashi clinics by removing the obstacles in such accessibility
- Improve the mechanism to access health related information for journalists and media from the Surjer Hashi clinics
- Allow journalists to visit field according to their available schedule and without any structure forms of reporting
- Arrange TV talk-shows on health issues inviting poor and marginalized people to share their thoughts and experiences over the health service delivery system.



Mr. Matiur Rahman, Editor of Daily Manabzamin and chair of the session in his speech emphasized that media must play an influential role in promoting essential healthcare services available to all Bangladeshis, especially underserved communities. In Bangladesh, rate of child and maternal death has decreased a lot where media has played an effective role, he added. Appreciating, Surjer Hashi clinic's contribution to national health care services he said, it has done a great job in health sector which has to be acknowledged. Recommending



the way forward for the highest visibility of this project he mentioned that NHSDP should go for organizing TV talk-shows where people like rickshaw puller and other similar types of population groups to share their thoughts because they have the real experience about the health service delivery system. He expressed with satisfaction that the media dialogue created greater awareness amongst the journalists about the Surjer Hashi clinics and service delivery sites where people can avail high-quality, affordable healthcare in both rural and urban areas.

In conclusion Dr. Halida H. Akhter, Chief of Party, NHSDP thanked the attending journalists and other participants for their active participation and time.

Annexure:

Annex 1: Media Dialogue Schedule

Annex 2: List of the Journalist participants

Annex 3: Media Coverage on event news