

REPORT

Regional Media Dialogue on Journalism in Essential Health Care Services

Organize by: USAID-DFID NGO Health Service Delivery Project

December 22, 2015

Sylhet



“Journalism in Essential Healthcare Services”



A Regional Media Dialogue on Journalism in Essential Health Care Services was held at the Hotel Supreme, Sylhet on December 22, 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).

The purpose of the media dialogue was to have an open dialogue with the media people, share essential health services provided by Surjer Hashi 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. The specific objectives of the Regional Media Dialogue were as below:



- Effective use of mass media in creating awareness about the SH networks and the service delivery sites
- Provide information to the people about the quality and equitable services affordable for all especially for the poor and underprivileged groups of rural and urban areas being delivered from the SH service delivery networks.
- Generate support of the people in operation and management of the SH service delivery sites at different tiers
- Bring regional level media professionals exposed with SH network with its service deliveries and local NGO and clinics establish relationship with media and professionals.

This event was jointly organized by NHSDP and Sylhet Samaj Kallyan Samity (SSKS) and BCC team of NHSDP. The regional media dialogue had planned to bring community voice in interactions and dialogue with the journalists so that journalist gets a sense of community ownership of SH clinic and its service deliveries. Under this plan a member of the SHCSG, a CSP and a satisfied customer attended this event to share their role, involvement and experience with SH clinic and take part in the discussion. The entire Project Director and Clinic Manager of Sylhet districts were also attended and take part in the discussion with the media professionals.

In the dialogue, a total of 38 regional level journalists represent national and regional print and electronic media of Sylhet division were present to share their opinion and experiences. Mr. Liaquaqt Shah Faridi, Special Correspondence & Bureau Chief, The Daily Bortoman, Sylhet

presided over the meeting while Mr. Taj Uddin Ahmed, Deputy Chief Reporter, Daily Sylheter Dak shared the journalist’s views on ‘Journalism in Essential Health Care Services in Sylhet’. Dr. Halida H. Akhter, Chief of Party, NHSDP, Mr. Shafiqur Rahman, Director – BCC, NHSDP, Rtn. Belal Ahmed, Executive Director, SSKS attended the dialogue event. Mr. Shah Shohel Ahmed, Bureau Chief, Daily Alokito Bangladesh and Mr. Abu Hasib Mostafa Jamal, BCC & Marketing Coordinator of NHSDP jointly moderated the session.

The dialogue began with self-introduction following which Rtn. Belal Ahmed, General Secretary, SSKS welcomed the participants and 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.

Dr. Halida Hanum Akhter, Chief of Party, NHSDP initiated the discussion and described about the entire Surjer Hashi network of 388 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 26 million people each year throughout Bangladesh. The event brought together community health experts and media professionals to discuss the approach taken by NHSDP’s Surjer Hashi 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. She also explained how Surjer Hashi clinics contributing to National Health Service delivery program in the rural and urban areas.

After explaining the objectives of the dialogue, there were three presentations on uniqueness of NHSDP services made by 2 Project Directors and 1 Clinic Manager of SH NGO network. The presentations were on interventions of NHSDP on :

- i) *Empowering pregnant mothers: birth preparedness, Mayer bank, and red flag;*
- ii) *Reaching of poor: NHSDP serving underserved population of the community;*
- iii) *Adolescent coverage: Winning approach to access unmarried adolescents in educational institutions;*

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 interactive discussion and question answer session Mr. Aziz Ahmed Salim, President, Sylhet Zilla Press Club, Mohammad Serajul Islam, Secretary, Sylhet Zilla Press Club, Maruf Ahmad, District Correspondence, NTV, Amita Singha, Staff Correspondent,



Shyamal Sylhet discussed on reporting essential health care services and on the existing health care services at Sylhet. 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.

Some of the specific questions of the journalists were as below:

- Are NHSDP is only providing maternal health services, if not then what other services are being offered
- Red flag is a good initiative but NHSDP encounters any community opposition to hoist it or is there any chance of stigmatization of that particular family
- One journalist expressed his experience on spending long time to consult with the medical officer
- NHSDP has brought community voices only from the urban areas why are not they are bringing it from the rural areas
- How NHSDP justifies SH clinic services as quality one
- As a journalist we have not experienced any of NHSDP's community level interventions
- Can NHSDP consider work for Haor areas
- Sylhet has low level of health indicator, has NHSDP targeted to raise it through their health service delivery efforts

After having responses over the above questions and being informed about the activities of the project, the journalists suggested several recommendations as listed below;

- Capacitate the regional level journalists through workshops and trainings
- Hold workshops and trainings at regional & local 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

Mr. Liaquaqt Shah Faridi, Special Correspondence & Bureau Chief, The Daily Bortoman, 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. 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: Media Coverage on event news