

Half-yearly newsletter of
 USAID's Research for Decision Makers (RDM) Activity

RDM Bits & Bytes



From CoP's Desk

Greetings!

It is my absolute pleasure to introduce USAID's Research for Decision Makers (RDM) Activity to you all through the first issue of RDM Bits & Bytes – the RDM's half-yearly newsletter.

RDM is a five-year implementation research project of USAID/Bangladesh, and implemented by icddr,b that started on May 18, 2017. Through this project, we conduct research and generate evidence in four thematic areas – Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH), Family Planning and Reproductive Health (FP-RH),

Tuberculosis (TB), and Nutrition – and three cross-cutting issues – Universal Health Coverage (UHC), Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) and Gender.

We work in partnership with Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP), National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), other line departments of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), USAID implementation partners and some other NGOs. From its inception, MEASURE Evaluation/Data for Impact (D4I) has been a key partner of RDM.

With this newsletter, we plan to share our stories of achievements, and learnings with you.

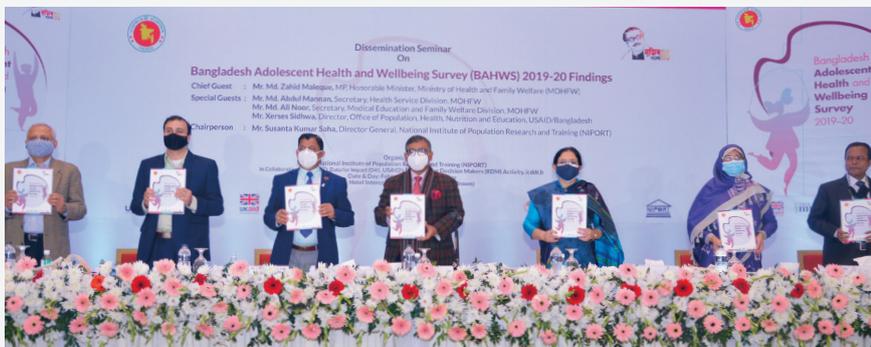
On behalf of the RDM team, I would like to express my gratitude to USAID/Bangladesh for their continuous financial and technical support. I would also like to thank you, for being with us.

Shams El Arifeen

Chief of Party (CoP), RDM, and Senior Director, Maternal and Child Health Division (MCHD)
 icddr,b

Highlights (October 2020 – March 2021)

Bangladesh Adolescent Health & Wellbeing Survey 2019-20 Report launched



Distinguished guests launching the Final Report of the Bangladesh Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Survey 2019-20. From left, Tahmeed Ahmed (Executive Director, icddr,b), Xerses Sidhwa (Office Director, Office of Population Health Nutrition and Education, USAID/Bangladesh); Susanta Kumar Saha (Director General, NIPORT); Md Zahid Maleque, MP (Minister, MoHFW); Shahan Ara Banu, ndc (Director General, DGFP); Nasima Sultana, ndc (Additional Director General, DGHS); and Md Rafiqul Islam Sarker (Director - Research, NIPORT)

The first-ever Bangladesh Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Survey (BAHWS) 2019-20 Report was launched on February 11, 2021. Md Zahid Maleque, Member of Parliament, honorable Minister of MoHFW, launched the report in the presence of dignitaries and representatives from USAID, govt agencies, development partners, INGO, academia, and icddr,b. The primary objective of the BAHWS 2019-20 was to examine and better understand the state of health and wellbeing of male and female adolescents ages 15-19 years in the country. The final report, summary findings, presentation, and video recording are available at this [link](#).

Storytelling with data: Session held on childhood pneumonia in Bangladesh



Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman presenting on pneumonia-related deaths among children below 5-years in Bangladesh

On November 11, 2020, Data for Impact (D4I) and RDM observed World Pneumonia Day with a Storytelling with data session with health reporters on childhood pneumonia and its disease burden in Bangladesh. Prof. Dr Md Ruhul Amin, eminent Paediatric Pulmonologist; Prof. Dr Samir Kumar Saha, Executive Director, Child Health Research Foundation (CHRF); Dr Mohammad Jobayer Chisti, Senior Scientist, Hospitals, Nutrition and Clinical Services Division, icddr,b; and Shams

El Arifeen, CoP, RDM and Senior Director, MCHD, icddr,b attended the session as technical experts. Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman, Associate Scientist of icddr,b, made the keynote presentation and exchanged views with journalists on ways to prevent pneumonia related deaths among children below 5 years of age.

Speakers highlighted that pneumonia is not a single entity, it is a combination of various health complications. They emphasized on

the fact that, it is important to identify the causes of pneumonia, strengthen our health system and invest in low-cost local solutions to prevent these premature deaths. Fourteen health journalists from leading national media houses attended this session. This session resulted in receiving comprehensive media coverage in all prominent media houses (34 print media and two electronic media). Media coverage of the event can be found [here](#).

Storytelling with data: Session held on prematurity in Bangladesh



Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman presenting on prematurity and low birth weight burden in Bangladesh

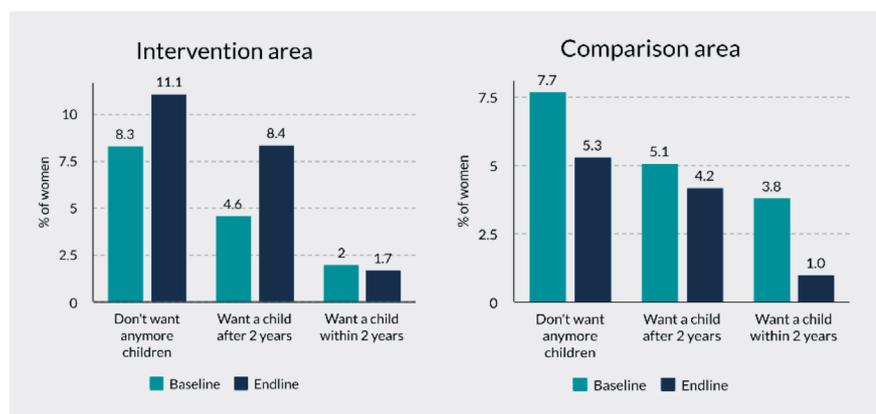
The second session of Storytelling with data was held on February 3, 2021, on prematurity and low birth weight (LBW) in Bangladesh. Fourteen journalists from eminent media houses attended this session. Prof. Mohammad Shahidullah, Chairman, National Technical Working Committee Neonatal Health, and Dr

Sayed Rubayet, Country Director, Ipas Bangladesh, presented as technical experts. Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman made the keynote presentation.

Speakers discussed the prematurity and LBW burden in Bangladesh, innovations, and interventions to reduce the burden and importance

of bringing positive changes in the mindset of the care seekers to prevent these unwanted deaths. The event received comprehensive media coverage in all prominent media outlets of the country (33 print media and six electronic media). Media coverage of the event can be found [here](#).

DGFP organized dissemination of RDM-D4I study findings



Percentage of women using LARC (implants and IUD) according to their intention of limiting or spacing pregnancy, in intervention and comparison areas of the study

The Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) in collaboration with RDM and D4I organized a virtual seminar to disseminate the findings of the study titled “Segmented-client communication approach for

improving the use of long-acting reversible contraceptives and permanent methods in Bangladesh” on December 21, 2020. Dr Nurun Nahar Begum, Line Director (LD), Clinical Contraception Services

Delivery Program (CCSDP) attended the event as special guest. Chief investigators of the study Dr Md Jasim Uddin from icddr,b and Dr Mizanur Rahman from D4I shared the findings of the study with the audiences. The major objective of the study was to increase the use of long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) and permanent methods (PM) through implementing segmented-client communication intervention in the government family planning service delivery system. The study found that segmented-client communication approach helped to increase LARC use significantly in the intervention area compared to the comparison area. The final report of the study can be accessed [here](#).

Discussion meeting held with National Newborn Health Program & IMCI on EN-BIRTH Study (Phase 2)



Representatives from NNHP&IMCI of DGHS and icddr,b attending a discussion session on EN-BIRTH Study - Phase 2

A discussion meeting to share the progress of the study titled “Advancing routine Health Management Information Systems (HMIS) to deliver for Every Newborn (EN-BIRTH Study - Phase 2)” took place on October 12, 2020.

The meeting was held with the key personnel from the National Newborn Health Program & IMCI (NNHP&IMCI), DGHS, and icddr,b. The study team from icddr,b shared the protocol, draft action plan and update on the progress and findings

from EN-BIRTH Study - Phase 2. Dr Muhammad Shariful Islam, Assistant Director, DGHS and PM, NNHP & IMCI attended the meeting. More information on the study is available [here](#).

Training held on “eMIS to capture maternal hypertension and diabetes services” held



Health care providers received training on eMIS to capture maternal hypertension and diabetes services in Satoria Upazila

The RDM study titled “Designing and developing electronic Management Information System (eMIS) to capture maternal hypertension and diabetes services” organized two-batches of training for health care providers of Satoria Upazila Health Complex (UHC) between October

18-21, 2020. The objective of the training was to orient the health care providers on the implications of the electronic Management Information System (eMIS) to identify, screen, diagnose and manage maternal hypertension and diabetes of the “at risk population” of the Upazila. This

eMIS system is the android platform of Non-Communicable Disease Control (NCDC) program of the DGHS. icddr,b is assisting NCDC to digitize the maternal hypertension and diabetes service delivery process through this study. Detail on the study can be found [here](#).

Publications

October 2020 – March 2021

Policy/Research Brief

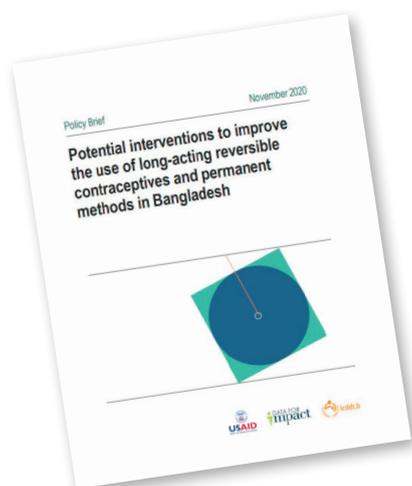
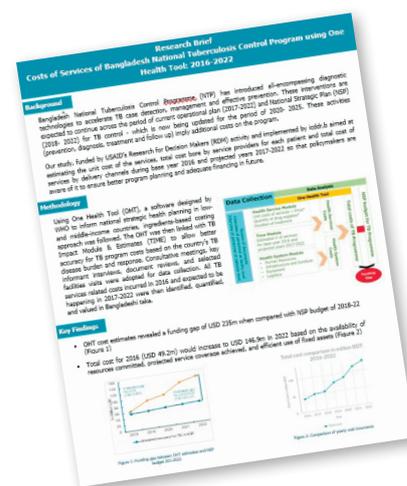
Policy brief on an assessment of the Advancing Adolescent Health (A2H) Program in Rangpur: Implications for future interventions

RDM, in collaboration with D4I, conducted an assessment of USAID’s Advancing Adolescent Health (A2H) program implemented by Plan International during 2016-2019 in Rangpur. The assessment showed that the A2H program seemed to have created a foundation for social change to tackle early marriage in Rangpur. Adolescents appear to have learned negotiation skills to engage their parents and guardians to achieve their preferred age at marriage. Program like A2H, with some modifications, has the potential for reducing the incidence of teenage marriage in Bangladesh. The policy brief includes recommendations for future interventions aimed at delaying early marriage, improving reproductive behaviors, and adolescent-friendly health services. The complete report of the assessment of the A2H program is available [here](#).



Research brief on costs of services of Bangladesh National Tuberculosis Control Program (NTP) using One Health Tool

This study estimated the supply-side costs of services of the Bangladesh NTP during the base year 2016 and target years 2017-22 using the One Health Tool (OHT). This mixed-method study revealed that the costs per patient for a shorter regimen of multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR) and pre-extensively drug-resistant TB (Pre-XDR) treatment is substantially less under the new treatment regimen of 2019 compared to the previous regimen of 2016, which can be scaled up. The study also found a funding gap of US\$ 235.2 million, indicating a requirement of additional investment for delivering TB services effectively up to 2022. The complete report of the study is available [here](#).

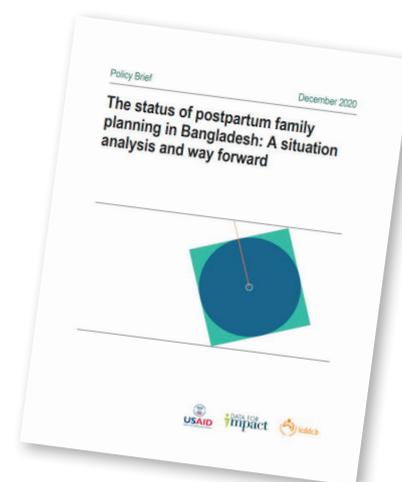


Policy brief on potential interventions to improve the use of long-acting reversible contraceptives and permanent methods in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has achieved a low fertility rate of 2.3 births per woman, with a contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) among married women of reproductive age of around 62% in 2017. This policy brief argues that shifting the method mix from short-acting contraceptive methods towards LARC and PM would lead to achieving the fertility rate of 2.0 or below births per woman, without increasing the CPR. The policy brief was developed by D4I, in collaboration with RDM.

Policy brief on the status of postpartum family planning in Bangladesh: A situation analysis and way forward

The postpartum family planning (PPFP) program in Bangladesh began in 2002. Initially it was focused on providing postpartum tubectomy but had little success in increasing the use of this method. More recently, provision of IUDs (since 2008) and implants (since 2016) at delivery have been included in the PPFP program. Although various pilot trainings and other intervention projects have been implemented in the public, nongovernmental organization (NGO), and private sectors since 2008, implementation of the PPFP program has generally been weak and spread thinly. This policy brief provides an overview of the status of PPFP in Bangladesh and provides recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the PPFP program. This policy brief was developed by D4I, in collaboration with RDM.



RDM in Media

October 2020 – March 2021

A purpose of RDM is to generate evidence and bring it to the mass people and policymakers alike. In doing so, RDM's presence in media plays a significant role. Based on the findings of the Bangladesh Adolescent Health & Wellbeing Survey 2019-20, the most circulated daily newspaper in Bangladesh, the Prothom Alo published an editorial on February 15, 2021 on stopping sexual harassment of teenage girls. You can read the editorial [here](#).

Op-ed: Fighting to breathe

Marking World Pneumonia Day 2020, the daily Dhaka Tribune published this op-ed on childhood pneumonia and its burden in Bangladesh. D4I and RDM jointly produced this op-ed that discussed several ways of preventing these unwanted deaths.

RDM's Capacity Development Initiatives for Young Professionals

Data analysis and thesis writing workshop held



Health professionals attending data analysis and thesis writing workshop

During March 14-16, 2021, RDM organized a workshop on data analysis and thesis writing in collaboration with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University

(BSMMU), Bangladesh Perinatal Society (BPS), and Bangladesh Neonatal Forum (BNF). This workshop is the third among the workshops RDM is organizing

for junior and mid-level health professionals. A total of 10 health professionals attended this interactive workshop and received certificates of completion.

Meet the Fellows

Utilizing the platform of the existing research fellow/trainee program of icddr,b, RDM is developing the capacity of young researchers through its fellowship program. This initiative focuses on implementation research and delivery science. Under

this program, fellows are enrolled for a two-year period and tagged with different study teams to gain theoretical learning and hands on experience on implementation research. So far, eight young researchers have been awarded with

the fellowship. Of them, six fellows have completed their fellowship successfully with RDM and most of them have been re-hired by icddr,b in different capacities. Currently, two fellows are continuing their fellowship with RDM. Find more about our fellows [here](#).



Fellows graduated from the RDM fellowship program : (From left to right) Dr Shehreen Zakir, Tania Sultana Tanwi, Dr Sabrina Choudhury, Shema Mhajabin, Dr Hashama Jahan Yousuf, and Shahed Sufian

From the Editor's Desk



Through USAID-funded RDM Activity, we are generating knowledge and evidence to address health issues effecting the lives of the Bangladeshi people. We believe that the proper utilization of this knowledge and evidence will be possible only when it reaches its' target audience. The primary purpose of RDM Bits & Bytes is to share the wealth of knowledge that our acclaimed scientists are producing through RDM research activities.

The first issue of RDM Bits & Bytes has brought to you the major

activities that we carried out during October 2020 and March 2021. As you read through, you learned about the launching of the first-ever Bangladesh Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Survey 2019-20 Report through a national level dissemination seminar; evidence-sharing sessions for health reporters on childhood pneumonia and prematurity which are major killers in Bangladesh; training for health workers, and workshop for aspiring health professionals that we organized and several policy and research briefs that we produced in collaboration with our partners.

Throughout the newsletter, we included links to relevant resources, which will be helpful for the readers.

Our sincere thanks to Shusmita Khan, Research Associate, D4I for her valuable inputs and guidance in developing this newsletter. From now on, RDM will be sharing its' half-yearly highlights through this newsletter. We hope to have you with us in this endeavor.

Quamrun Nahar

Technical Coordinator, RDM, and Head of Research, MCHD, icddr,b

For further communication, please write to: nandini.chowdhury@icddr.org

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