



Press Release

Preventing child death from Pneumonia requires multi system approach

Dhaka, 11 November 2020:

Pneumonia is not a single entity, it is a combination of various health complications. It is important to identify the causes of pneumonia, strengthen our health system and invest in low cost local solutions to prevent pneumonia and pneumonia related death among children aging below 5 years.

Speakers urged so today in an evidence sharing session with the Bangladesh Health Reporters' Forum (BHRF) in observance of the World Pneumonia Day (12 November 2020), held at icddr,b's Mohakhali Campus. The event discussed about the disease burden of pneumonia and ways to address pneumonia related premature deaths in Bangladesh.

The event was jointly organised by the Research for Decision Makers (RDM) Activity of icddr,b and Data for Impact (D4I), and was supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Fourteen health journalists from eminent media houses including Toufiq Maruf, President, BHRF attended the session.

Prof. Dr. Md. Ruhul Amin, 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 and Dr. Shams El Arifeen, Chief or Party, RDM Activity and Senior Director, Maternal and Child Health Division of icddr,b attended the session as technical experts and exchanged their views with journalists on ways to prevent these unfortunate deaths.

Dr. Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman, Associate Scientist at icddr,b informed the audience that according to Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2017, only 5% health facilities of Bangladesh has the necessary preparedness to provide proper treatment to pneumonia. The survey also found that not even half of the health facilities had health concentrator. Other oxygen sources were not available in one-third of the health facilities. A basic tool like pulse oximetry to measure oxygen saturation was available only in one-third of the district hospitals. Though health seeking behavior is still not developed among parents, without strengthening the systems, the children being brought to health centres cannot be provided with effective and timely treatment.

Prof. Dr. Ruhul Amin said that 18% of the children dying before completing 5 years of age are dying from pneumonia. Still sensitivity around this disease is low. He stressed on ensuring



nutrition of children by exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding; looking into the environmental factors such as pollution and timely treatment of children with respiratory distress can prevent pneumonia and pneumonia-related deaths.

Prof. Dr. Samir Kumar Saha identified that it is crucial to know the total numbers of children being affected by pneumonia every year, not only the death rate. For 50% of the pneumonia cases, causes are still unknown. Without this information, in the long run, pneumonia cannot be prevented. He stressed on combining efforts to strengthen the health systems so that parents bring their children to seek treatment.

Dr. Mohammad Jobayer Chisti focused on having pulse oximetry devices in hospitals and investing on low cost local innovations. He brought the example of shampoo bottle made low cost bubble CPAP machine that reduced death by 75% in during trial. He also stressed on focusing on malnutrition as malnutrition causes 15 times more death among pneumonia effected children.

Bangladesh has made significant progress in reducing child mortality and advancing the health sector in the past two decades. Despite that, it is very unfortunate that about 24,300 children die from pneumonia in Bangladesh every year, making 18% of the children dying before completing 5 years of their age. The Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) 2017 found that only 42% children aged less than 5 years with signs of lung infection were taken to a hospital/health facility and only 34% had received an antibiotic. According to the Bangladesh Health Facility Survey (BHFS) 2017, 45% of the pneumonia-related deaths are occurring at health facilities, which strongly indicate the lack of readiness of the health facilities to provide appropriate treatment for childhood pneumonia.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About RDM:

The USAID's RDM Activity is a five year implementation research project, implemented by icddr,b, to increase the use of evidence-based research and policy analysis for health planning and decision making to support the effective implementation of the 4th Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Program (HPNSP) 2017-22, with an ultimate goal to improve the health status of the Bangladeshi population.

About icddr,b:

icddr,b is an international public health research institution based in Bangladesh. Established in 1960, icddr,b has been at the forefront of discovering low cost solutions to key health challenges facing people living in poverty and provides robust evidence of their effectiveness at a large scale. Dedicated to saving lives through research and treatment, icddr,b addresses some of the most critical health concerns facing the world today.



About D4I:

Data for Impact (D4I), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is an associate award of MEASURE Evaluation and continues its long legacy of building evidence to improve health systems and programs. D4I supports countries to generate and use high-quality data to improve their programs, policies and-ultimately-health outcomes. We also strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of local partners to collect, analyze, and use data to support their move to self reliance.