

Minutes of Dissemination Seminar on IR Bangladesh ZDLH

A dissemination seminar on the study titled “Implementation research to reduce zero-dose (ZD) and under-immunized (UI) children in selected areas of Bangladesh”, organized by icddr,b on 15 January 2026. The seminar was held in the conference room of Institute of Public Health (IPH), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Mohakhali, Dhaka.

The seminar was chaired by Dr. Sara Maria Salway, Senior Director, Health Systems and Population Studies Division (HSPSD), icddr,b. The Chief Guest of the seminar was Mr. A. T. M. Saiful Islam, Additional Secretary, Health Services Division (HSD), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW). Special Guests included Dr. Md. Shibbir Ahmed Osmani, Joint Secretary, HSD, MOHFW, and Dr. Mohammad Shahariar Sajjad, Deputy Director (EPI), DGHS. The seminar was anchored by Ms. Tabita Jannatul, Senior Research Assistant, icddr,b. The list of participants, presentation slides and the photographs from the dissemination seminar are included in [Annex A](#), [Annex B](#) and [Annex C](#), respectively.

Foremost, the Chairperson Dr. Sara welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the seminar. In her welcome remarks, she stated that full immunization coverage (FVC) among children in Bangladesh has increased from 2% to 81.6%. Despite this progress, approximately 16–20% of the children remain under- or unvaccinated. Given such scenario, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance provided financial support and icddr,b in collaboration with Jhpiego and RedOrange Communication, implemented this research project with the overall cooperation of the HSD (MOHFW), EPI-DGHS, development partners, NGOs, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The field-level activities of this implementation research (IR) were completed successfully. She also mentioned that the dissemination seminar was organized to share the findings of this research with all EPI stakeholders. She further expressed her gratitude to the participants for attending the seminar despite their busy schedules and for contributing to the success of the event. She also conveyed special thanks to the MOHFW, development partners, NGOs, and CSOs and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Following the welcome remarks, Ms. Zerin Jannat, Assistant Scientist, icddr,b, presented the background, methodology, and the key findings of the study. Findings of the economic evaluation were presented by Dr. Shehrin Shaila Mahmood, Scientist, icddr,b. Recommendations and policy implications were presented by Dr. Md Jasim Uddin, Principle investigator of the study and Emeritus Scientist, icddr,b.

The study was conducted in five rural districts and one urban zone of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) between December 2023 and May 2025. It used a quasi-experimental pre–post design to measure the impact and economic evaluation of the interventions. Study areas were selected based on a prior rapid assessment that identified locations with high number of ZD and UI children.

Area-specific, innovative and evidence-based interventions were implemented in the intervention sites, reflecting the diverse geographic and social contexts of Bangladesh, while no activities were carried out in the comparison areas. The study team conducted both process and impact evaluations using baseline and endline household surveys. In total, 12,756 caregivers were interviewed at baseline (6,362 in intervention and 6,394 in comparison areas) and 12,974 caregivers at endline (6,459 in intervention and 6,515 in comparison areas). Key findings from the household survey were given as below:

- For children aged 12–23 months, valid FVC increased by 1.2% in the intervention areas but decreased by 0.5% in the comparison areas

- The prevalence of ZD/UI declined significantly in intervention sites of hilly, plain and urban areas but it increased in their respective comparison areas
- Although the prevalence of ZD and UI increased in some areas, analysis comparing changes over time showed that the intervention had a positive impact
- Major reasons for children being ZD/UI included child illness, the caregiver's decision to vaccinate the child later, vaccine shortage, human resource shortage, caregiver being busy, fear of side effects, migration, distance, inconvenient schedules, and family restrictions

Highlights from the findings of Economic Evaluation were:

- The programme was highly cost-effective compared to standard of care
- Economies of scale are possible through scale-up with increased coverage
- Context-specific investment is needed for effective coverage across all areas

The recommendations and policy implications of this study were to:

- Scale up promising interventions on a priority basis
- Ensure uninterrupted vaccine supply and sufficient human resources
- Recognize the need for area-specific plans
- Focus on areas specially with high ZD/UI prevalence
- Strengthen monitoring and supervision
- Conduct periodic reviews, and rapid assessments of new and high prevalent ZD/UI areas

A lively open discussion session followed after the presentation ended. Some key issues raised during the discussion sessions are highlighted below:

- Dr. Tajul Islam Bari, Former Programme Manager (EPI), DGHS, stated that there has been a lack of funding for procurement. He added that digital vaccine procurement through eVLMIS (Electronic Vaccine Logistics Management Information System) could help reduce this challenge. In addition, ensuring an uninterrupted vaccine supply and recruiting health assistants would help reduce the number of ZD and UI children.
- Dr. Muhammad Shariful Islam, Former Programme Manager (IMCI), DGHS, suggested introducing compulsory leave for working mothers by their employers on the day of vaccination of their children.
- Dr. Mahmuda Ali, Health Officer (Additional Charge), DNCC, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (MOLGRDC), acknowledged that the prevalence of ZD and UI children has improved with support from the Surjer Hasi Network (SHN). She noted that evening sessions create opportunities to vaccinate children of busy and working mothers.
- Dr. Nasrin Akhter, Executive Director, Radda MCH-FP Centre, suggested introducing community-level interventions. However, Dr. Uddin explained that several community-level interventions, such as advocacy meetings, courtyard meetings, and health education activities, were implemented based on area-specific needs.
- Dr. S. M. Wasimul Islam, Assistant Health Officer (AHO), Zone-5, DNCC, thanked to Bangladesh ZDLH team for conducting the project. He added that the project provided important

lessons on vaccinating children in densely populated communities, among floating populations, and within working-mother groups.

- Dr. Musharrat Jahan, Manager, Policy Advocacy, Save the Children International (SCI), suggested including Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (MNC&AH) indicators so that the study would be more cost-effective.
- The special guest of the seminar, Dr. Sajjad, Deputy Director (EPI), DGHS, expressed hope that challenges related to human resource shortages would be mitigated soon, as initiatives had recently been taken to complete the recruitment process for health assistants. Regarding the intervention-E-screening checklist app, he requested Mr. Pankoz Kumar Vhowmik, Health Officer, UNICEF, to integrate the application into the E-tracker system. This integration would help engage service providers who are not directly involved in child immunization to identify ZD and UI children. He proposed that the icddr,b research team and UNICEF should arrange a meeting to discuss how the E-screening checklist can be integrated into the E-tracker system.
- Dr. Osmani, Joint Secretary (PH Wing), HSD, MOHFW thanked the study team for conducting such timely IR. He added that the study findings would be shared at policy level to scale up the promising interventions.
- The chief guest, Mr. Islam, Additional Secretary (PH Wing), HSD, MOHFW, praised the implemented interventions and economic evaluation for supporting evidence-based policy decisions. He stated that since the birth of Bangladesh, the country has achieved remarkable successes across different sectors, and immunization program is one of them. He added the recent Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TCV) campaign -where the target was to vaccinate approximately 43.7 million children aged 9 months to 14 years – has successfully vaccinated 42.7 million children, achieving about 98% coverage. He recommended conducting IR focusing on Qawmi madrasas, noting that there are around 41,000 such institutions in Bangladesh and that caregivers in this group often have fears regarding vaccination. Additionally, he mentioned discrepancies in budget allocation, highlighting that hard-to-reach (HTR) areas require higher budgets compared to non-HTR areas. He further emphasized the introduction of real-time, online-based monitoring tools such as the E-supervision checklist app and appreciated the cost-effectiveness analysis, noting its usefulness for policymakers in scaling up interventions. He concluded his remarks, expressing hope that icddr,b research team will conduct similar IR in future that will be beneficial for policymakers and the government.

Dr. Sohana Shafique, Lead, Urban Health and Universal Health Coverage Research Group, HSPSD, icddr,b, thanked participants for their active engagement and for sharing valuable insights that enriched the discussion.

Annex A: List of participants

Sl.	Name	Position	Organization
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW)			
1.	A. T. M. Saiful Islam	Additional Secretary (PH Wing), HSD	MOHFW
2.	Dr. Md Shibbir Ahmed Osmani	Joint Secretary (PH Wing), HSD	MOHFW
3.	Md. Golam Kibria	Deputy Secretary, (PH Wing), HSD	MOHFW
4.	Md. Saiful Islam Majumder	Senior Assistant Secretary, (PH Wing), HSD	MOHFW
Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)			
5.	Dr. Mohammad Shahariar Sajjad	Deputy Director (EPI), DGHS	MOHFW
6.	Dr. S. M. Abdullah-Al-Murad	OSD, Ex Line Director (MNC&AH), DGHS	MOHFW
7.	Dr. Hasanul Mahmud	Asstt. Director (EPI), DGHS	MOHFW
8.	Dr. Abul Fazal Md. Shahabuddin Khan	OSD, Ex Former Program Manager (EPI), DGHS	MOHFW
9.	Dr. Md. Shafikul Islam	Ex Deputy Program Manager (EPI), DGHS	MOHFW
10.	Dr. Rajib Sarkar	Medical Officer (EPI), DGHS	MOHFW
11.	Dr. Md. Ariful Islam	Medical Officer, EPI, DGHS	MOHFW
12.	Md. Mesbahul Haque	Cold Chain Engineer, EPI, DGHS	MOHFW
City Corporations			
13.	Dr. Mahmuda Ali	Health Officer (Additional Charge)	MOLGRDC
14.	Dr. S.M. Wasimul Islam	Assistant Health Officer, Zone-5, DNCC	MOLGRDC
15.	Md. Uzzal Mollah	EPI Supervisor	DNCC
16.	Md. Selim Hossain	EPI Supervisor	DNCC
17.	Md. Hadiul Alam	EPI Supervisor	DNCC
Health Specialist's/Academic's			
18.	Dr. Md. Abdul Jalil Mondal	Former Deputy Director and Program Manager (EPI)	DGHS
19.	Dr. Md. Abdur Rahim	Former Deputy Director and Program Manager (EPI)	DGHS
20.	Dr. Tajul Islam A Bari	Former Program Manager (EPI)	DGHS
21.	Dr. Muhammad Shariful Islam	Former Program Manager (IMCI)	DGHS
22.	Mrs. Mehnaz Rafat	Deputy Director	PIACT Bangladesh
23.	Prof. Dr. Md. Zahid Hussain	Chairman	Bangladesh Paediatric Association (BPA)
24.	Dr. Umme Kulsum	Assistant Scientist	ideSHi
25.	Dr. Md. Shakkar Rahman	Senior Program Manager	Shastho Surokkha Foundation
Development partners, NGOs, CSOs			
26.	Dr. Ariful Islam	NPO (Immunization)	WHO
27.	Dr. Md. Hasanuzzaman	Consultant	UNICEF
28.	Pankoz Kumar Vhowmik	Health Officer	UNICEF
29.	Dr. Mohammed Muhibul Kashem	Senior Program Officer -Immunization	PATH
30.	Mr. Golam Mothabbir	Director- Health & Nutrition	Save the Children International (SCI), Bangladesh
31.	Dr. Tahmid Hasan Probad	Senior Manager, Clinical Service	Surjer Hashi Network (SHN)
32.	Md. Farhad Hossain	Clinic Manager	Surjer Hashi Network (SHN)
33.	Dr. Nasrin Akhter	Executive Director	Radda MCH-FP Centre

Sl.	Name	Position	Organization
34.	Dr. Musharrat Jahan	Manager Policy Advocacy	Save the Children International (SCI), Bangladesh
	Consortium members		
35.	Mr. Susanto Dobey	Director/Country Lead, Jhpiego Bangladesh	Jhpiego
36.	Dr. Md. Tanvir Hossen	Advisor- Immunisation, MCGL Project	Jhpiego
37.	Dr. Samiha Yunus	Project lead, Jhpiego Bangladesh	Jhpiego
38.	Md. Golam Rabbani	Program Specialist	Jhpiego
39.	Oindrila Chakraborty	Manager, Operations	RedOrange
40.	Sajedul Karim	Senior Copy Writer	RedOrange
41.	Abdullah Al Kafi	Senior Communication Executive	RedOrange
	icddr,b		
42.	Dr. Sarah Maria Salway	Senior Director, HSPSD	icddr,b
43.	Dr. Md. Nurul Alam	Emeritus Scientist	icddr,b
44.	Dr. Md. Jasim Uddin	Emeritus Scientist	icddr,b
45.	Dr. Ashraful Islam Khan	Scientist	icddr,b
46.	Dr. S.M. Manzoor Ahmed Hanifi	Senior Scientist	icddr,b
47.	Dr. Shehrin Shaila Mahmood	Scientist	icddr,b
48.	Dr. Sohana Shafique	Project Coordinator	icddr,b
49.	Bidhan Krishna Sarker	Associate Scientist	icddr,b
50.	Dr. Md. Zahid Hasan	Associate Scientist	icddr,b
51.	Zerin Jannat	Assistant Scientist	icddr,b
52.	Md. Wazed Ali	Field Research Manager	icddr,b
53.	Dr. Khadija Islam Tisha	Research Investigator	icddr,b
54.	Hemel Das	Statistician	icddr,b
55.	Dr. Farzana Tamanna Ummey Shaon	Senior Research Officer	icddr,b
56.	Tabita Jannatul	Senior Research Assistant	icddr,b
57.	Sohana Akter Moni	Senior Research Assistant	icddr,b
58.	Zillur Rahman Sakin	Senior Research Assistant	icddr,b
59.	Faria Abdullah	Information Manager	icddr,b
60.	Arif Ahmed	Senior Administrative Officer	icddr,b

Annex B: Presentation slides of dissemination seminar

Please click the link below to download the presentation slides

[Presentation slides of IR dissemination seminar](#)

Annex C: Photographs from the dissemination seminar



Picture 1: Welcome remarks by the Chairperson, Dr. Sara Maria Salway, Senior Director, HSPSD, icddr,b



Picture 2: Participants of dissemination seminar



Picture 3: Sharing findings of the study by Ms. Zerin Jannat, Assistant Scientist, icddr,b



Picture 4: Open discussion session with participants



Picture 5: Responses to the queries by Dr. Md. Jasim Uddin, Principal Investigator of the study and Emeritus Scientist, icddr,b



Picture 6: Speech by Chief Guest, Mr. A. T. M. Saiful Islam, Additional Secretary, HSD, MOHFW