

Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AdSEARCH) by icddr,b

AdSEARCH BITES

Monthly Newsletter

Volume 2 | Issue 1



Let's UNiTE to End Gender-Based Violence

4 December 2024

Stepping into 2025, AdSEARCH by icddr,b vows to bridge evidence and activism, advocating to end gender-based violence inspired by the spirit of the 16 Days of Activism. As part of the global campaign in 2024, the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Forum, with support from Ipas Bangladesh and AdSEARCH organised a seminar "**Let's UNiTE to End Gender-Based Violence 2024**", at Lakeshore Dhaka. The occasion

brought together policymakers and leading activists, academics, journalists and development partners from diverse entities to initiate dialogues on GBV and the enforcement of the 2018 TFT ban. In the welcome address, **Professor Farhana Dewan**, President, OGSB & Co-convenor, CSO Forum called for united efforts across all sectors. *"We must unite—government, NGOs, and individuals—to put an end to*

violence against women. It's not just a social responsibility but a moral imperative," she declared. During the opening session, **Dr Sayed Rubayet**, Country Director of Ipas Bangladesh presented the CSO Forum's position for women's rights and gender equality in the context of Bangladesh. Followed by a presentation titled "GBV-a Global and Bangladesh Burden" presentation,

Professor Kaosar Afsana underscored the severity of GBV as a major human rights violation and global public health problem, emphasizing that it remains one of the most underreported crimes worldwide.



To stop GBV, we must engage communities and leverage technology to drive change.”



Professor Kaosar Afsana
BRAC James P Grand School of Public Health, BRAC University

The central theme of the event was the ongoing challenge of “enforcing the ban on the Two-Finger Test (TFT) in collecting medico-legal evidence of rape”. Despite the 2018 ban on the TFT, the following session highlighted its continued use due to

ignorance among medical and legal professionals. **Nahida Akter**, Gender equality specialist of icddr,b presented findings from the AdSEARCH study titled “Implementation of the Ban on Two-Finger Test in Medico-Legal Evidence Collection”. The findings reveal significant gaps in awareness and enforcement, particularly outside Dhaka. The session moderator, **Dr Ruchira Tabassum Naved**,



Research shows it (TFT) is ineffective in proving rape. It assumes that if two fingers can be inserted easily, the woman or child is accustomed to sexual intercourse—a harmful and baseless notion.”



Dr Fahmida Nargis
Lecturer, Community Medicine and Public Health Department, Dhaka Medical College and Hospitals

condemned the practice as inhumane, unethical, unscientific, and unreliable.

One of the session presenters **Dr Fahmida Nargis** delivered a presentation titled “TFT: An Unscientific, Unethical & Unreliable test in proving rape”. Advocate **Masuda Rehana Begum**, Joint General Secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, also engaged in the dialogue as she called for coordinated efforts between the government and private sectors to increase public awareness about the TFT ban. In the open discussion titled “Shaping the



The continued use of the TFT retraumatizes victims and discourages them from seeking justice. We need greater awareness to fully eradicate this practice.”



Dr Ruchira Tabassum Naved
Emeritus Scientist, icddr,b



The CSO Forum also moderated the oath-taking session, where participants pledged to say no to violence, break the silence, and UNITE to End Gender-Based Violence.



Future: Charting a Path to a Gender-based Violence-Free Bangladesh”,
Dr Tasnim Azim facilitated and engaged the audience with the day’s reflections.

Dr Azim also invited the honorable chief guest **Md. Saidur Rahman Khan**, to the stage for his remarks. Mr Khan reaffirmed the government’s commitment to ending the practice. In the closing remarks, the co-chair of the event, **Barrister Sara Hossain**,



“The Two-Finger Test is a cruel practice banned by the court, and we will take further steps to ensure it is not conducted.”

Md. Saidur Rahman Khan
 Additional Secretary,
 Cabinet Division

emphasised the crucial role of civil society in reducing GBV and ending the TFT. She highlighted the importance of circumstantial evidence and DNA testing as alternatives. Among others **Edward Cabrera**,



“Patriarchal society needs to change, not just the law.”

Barrister Sara Hossain
 Honorary Executive Director of BLAST and Co-convenor of the CSO Forum

Shireen Huq, Dr Shams El Arifeen, Project Director of AdSEARCH by icddr,b and **Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman**, Technical Coordinator of AdSEARCH also delivered their remarks.



“We need to work together to ensure that the victims of GBV and sexual violence have access to the necessary resources through proper referral pathways. This will enable them to obtain support such as employment assistance, housing, and mental health care.”

Edward Cabrera
 First Secretary (Development),
 High Commission of Canada in Bangladesh



“As the lead of the Women Affairs Reform Commission, I am committed to ensuring the total ban on TFT.”

Shireen Huq
 Co-Founder and Member,
 Naripokkho

The seminar concluded with a resounding call to action for stronger collaboration across all sectors to end GBV and promote gender equality.



A few snapshots from the "Signature for Commitment" and the collection of momentum.

AdSEARCH study presented at ISOFS Conference

12 December 2024



At the 9th International Conference of the Society of Obstetric Fistula Surgeons (ISOFS), **Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman**, presented a study “Design, Development, and Demonstration of a Hospital-Based Register for Fistula Management in Bangladesh” in Dhaka. ISOFS is the leading international professional body for those engaged at the forefront of the prevention of obstetric fistula, treatment and rehabilitation of women with fistula. Based on a study by AdSEARCH, Dr Rahman highlighted how a unified, hospital-based register could provide valuable insights into the prevalence and management of fistula

in Bangladesh. Standardising data collection across healthcare facilities aims to enhance patient care, bolster health services, and ensure accountability in addressing this debilitating condition. Dr Rahman emphasised the importance of accurate registration for identifying gaps in care, optimising resource allocation, and improving treatment outcomes. He pointed, that registration is a vital tool to measure the scale of the problem, monitor progress, and guide evidence-based policy decisions.

In his remark **Dr Shams El Arifeen**, “*Our goal of a fistula-free Bangladesh by 2030*

and it just less than 6 years away. While treatment facilities play a critical role, we must also channel our energy into preventing fistula altogether. Prevention, accurate data, and coordinated efforts across all sectors are essential”.

This five-day long conference was attended by over 500 delegates, including 167 international participants from 35 countries, centered on global efforts to eliminate obstetric fistula. The event was virtually inaugurated by **Professor Muhammad Yunus**, Chief Adviser of the Interim Government of Bangladesh.

Major Attendees (chronology as appeared in the news):

Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman, Technical Coordinator of AdSEARCH & Scientist, icddr,b

Dr Shams El Arifeen, Project Director, AdSEARCH & Emeritus Scientist, icddr,b

AdSEARCH on Setting National Standards for Assessing SRHR Services in Bangladesh

24 December 2024



A stakeholder engagement workshop on the 'Assessment of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Services through a Health Facility Survey in Bangladesh' took place at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon, Dhaka. The workshop was jointly organised by the National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT) and AdSEARCH by icddr,b. Discussion of the workshop revolved around setting national standards for assessing SRHR service and the status with the set standards, along exploring the

status for neglected SRHR services. The workshop was graced by **Dr Md. Sarwar Bari**, Secretary of the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as the Chief Guest. **Dr Shams El Arifeen**, attended as the Special Guest, while **Dr Ashrafi Ahmad**, chaired the session. The event brought together policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders from various sectors of the country's healthcare system.

Dr Ahmad Ehsanur Rahman, delivered presentation on the current state of SRHR services in Bangladesh, highlighting existing gaps, opportunities, and challenges. The speakers emphasised the importance of ensuring accessibility, improving the quality of SRHR services, and extending these services to marginalised communities. The workshop is expected to contribute significantly to the development of SRHR services in the country, fostering a stronger, more inclusive healthcare system.

Major Attendees (chronology as appeared in the news):

Dr Md. Sarwar Bari, Secretary of the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Dr Shams El Arifeen, Project Director, AdSEARCH & Emeritus Scientist, icddr,b

Dr Ashrafi Ahmad, Director General, NIPORT

Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman, Technical Coordinator of AdSEARCH & Scientist, icddr,b

Joint Secretary of the Health Service Division visited Baliakandi UHC and Oversees AdSEARCH Studies

29 December 2024



Ms Rokeya Begum, Joint Secretary of the Health Service Division, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, in a visit at Baliakandi Upazila Health Complex (UHC), learned about the ongoing implementation of the multiple AdSEARCH studies at the Baliakandi UHC facilities. Currently, AdSEARCH is conducting an Adolescent and a Pregnancy Cohort study at the Baliakandi UHC. During the visit, Ms Begum was

accompanied by AdManage, and AdPreDiCCtion study team on the progress achieved through facility strengthening efforts, including: renovation of infrastructure, deployment of trained personnel, provision of essential materials such as BCC tools, SOPs, and signage, distribution of key medical kit boxes. She was also debriefed about the pregnancy Cohort Study, which highlights the systematic approach to both facility and

home visits, ensuring improved maternal and newborn healthcare services. Ms Begum expressed her appreciation for the efforts and highlighted the importance of collaborative support from **Dr Md. Faruk Hossain**, Upazila Health & Family Planning Officer (UH&FPO). In Joint Secretary's enthusiastic remark, **"The printed solutions are innovative, especially the printed footprints from the ANC corner that guides the patients."**

Workshop on Data Analysis and Manuscript Writing for Health Professionals Held at BSMMU

29-30 December 2024



A two-day capacity development workshop on data analysis and manuscript writing for health professionals was held at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU). The workshop was organised by AdSEARCH and facilitated by the researchers from the Maternal and Child Health Division (MCHD) of icddr,b. 25 participants including professors and researchers from BSMMU, Bangladesh Shishu Hospital & Institute, BIRDEM,

Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Mugda Medical College, and Dhaka Medical College participated in the workshop. Experts from AdSEARCH facilitated the sessions. The primary goal was to enhance participants' skills in designing, conducting, analysing, and publishing research. The sessions covered essential aspects such as literature review, data analysis, result interpretation, and

effective communication of findings in a structured, scientifically sound manner. Participants described the workshop as highly informative and tailored to the specific needs of health professionals. They expressed their appreciation for the practical approach and highlighted the value of such training in improving their research capabilities.

Condolence Message

We are deeply heartbroken by the loss of **Dr Md. Azizul Alim**, Program Manager, Maternal Health, DGH, on 24 December 2024.

Dr Alim was more than a collaborator, he was an integral part of many AdSEARCH studies since its inception in 2021. His dedication and commitment enriched AdSEARCH's research and significantly strengthened efforts to advance sexual and reproductive health in the country. AdSEARCH team's thoughts are with his family, friends, and colleagues during this time of immense loss.



Publication Alert:

Opinion Pieces



বন্ধ্যত্ব নিয়ে ভাঙুক নিরবতা

Author: A.S.M Riad Arif, Quamrun Nahar, Anubhab Chakraborty
Daily: Prothom Alo
Published Date: 19 December 2024
Link: <https://www.prothomalo.com/opinion/column/qbus0pl8m>



স্বীযোগ সেবার প্রতি দৃষ্টি ফেরানোর সময় এখনই

Author: Dr Sabrina Jabeen, A.S.M Riad Arif, Md. Mahiur Rahman
Daily: Samakal
Published Date: 2 January 2025
Link: <https://samakal.com/opinion/article/273253>

Published Journal Articles



Understanding the socio-demographic and programmatic factors associated with adolescent motherhood and its association with child undernutrition in Bangladesh

Author: Md. Alamgir Hossain, Novel Chandra Das, Md. Tariqujjaman, Abu Bakkar Siddique, Rubaiya Matin Chandrima, Md. Fakhar Uddin, S. M Hasibul Islam, Abu Sayeed, Anisuddin Ahmed, Shams El Arifeen, Hassan Rushekh Mahmood, Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman & Aniq Tasnim Hossain
Journal: BMC Public Health
Published Date: August 2024
Read more: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-19355-3>



Understanding water, sanitation, and hygiene situation through participatory appraisal in urban slum of Dhaka City

Author: Fahmida Dil Farzana, Daluwar Hossain, Mahfuzur Rahman, Quamrun Nahar, Shams El Arifeen, Tahmeed Ahmed, Mustafa Mahfuz
Journal: European Journal of Environment and Public Health
Published Date: August 2024
Read more: <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejeph/15585>



Comprehensive Analysis of SARS-CoV-2 Dynamics in Bangladesh: Infection Trends and Variants (2020-2023)

Author: Mst Noorjahan Begum, Selim Reza Tony, Mohammad Jubair, Md Shaheen Alam, Yeasir Karim, Mohammad Hridoy Patwary, Sezanur Rahman, Mohammad Tanbir Habib, Anisuddin Ahmed, Mohammad Enayet Hossain, Mohammed Ziaur Rahman, Manjur Hossain Khan, Tahmina Shirin, Firdausi Qadri, Mustafizur Rahman
Journal: Viruses
Published Date: August 2024
Read more: <https://doi.org/10.3390/v16081263>



Managing pre and postpartum mental health issues of refugee women from fragile and conflict-affected countries: A systematic review

Author: Saraban Tahura Ether, Sadia Afrin, Nawal Noshin Habib, Fahmida Akter, Anika Tasneem Chowdhury, Abu Sayeed, Sahar Raza, Anisuddin Ahmed, KM Saif-Ur-Rahman
Journal: Public health in practice
Published Date: December 2024
Read more: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhip.2024.100573>



ধর্ষণ প্রমাণে নিষিদ্ধ 'টু ফিঙ্গার' পরীক্ষা থামছে না

4 December 2024

<https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/86rv47xw1s>



ধর্ষণ প্রমাণে টু ফিঙ্গার টেস্ট এখনও বন্ধ হয়নি

4 December 2024

<https://samakal.com/bangladesh/article/268684>



ধর্ষণ প্রমাণে এখনো চলছে টু ফিঙ্গার টেস্ট

4 December 2024

<https://www.ajkerpatrika.com/national/ajpsmrgh3btik>



টু ফিঙ্গার টেস্ট: ধর্ষণের শিকার নারী যে ১০ ভাবে অপদস্ত হন

4 December 2024

<https://www.ajkerpatrika.com/national/ajpz13zwl5sqe>

Print



5 December 2024

ধর্ষণ প্রমাণে এখনো চলছে টু ফিঙ্গার টেস্ট

নিষেধ প্রতিবেদন, ১৭০
উচ্চ আদালত ধর্ষণ প্রমাণে টু ফিঙ্গার টেস্ট (টু ফিঙ্গার টেস্ট) নিষিদ্ধ করে দেবে বলে জানিয়েছেন প্রধান বিচারপতি এম এন এম হুমায়ূন আহমেদ।



5 December 2024

ধর্ষণ প্রমাণে টু ফিঙ্গার টেস্ট এখনও বন্ধ হয়নি

গণমাধ্যম প্রতিবেদন
ধর্ষণ প্রমাণে টু ফিঙ্গার টেস্ট বা টু ফিঙ্গার টেস্ট নিষিদ্ধ করে দেবে বলে জানিয়েছেন প্রধান বিচারপতি এম এন এম হুমায়ূন আহমেদ।

AdSEARCH Bites Previous Issues:



<http://adsearch.icddr.org/Study/AllPublications>

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