



# ADVANCING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (AdSEARCH) by icddr, b

To accelerate the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) outcomes and realisation of rights among different population groups with distinct SRH needs in Bangladesh.



“Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) can be understood as a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being which is the right for all, irrespective of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, socioeconomic or occupational status to make choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction.”



The promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is crucial for ensuring human well-being, gender equality, and advancing toward a more equitable world. SRHR affects many aspects of daily life and is essential for achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite progress in this area, Bangladesh still faces challenges in SRHR for various groups, such as adolescents, newly-wed couples, pregnant women, women in the ready-made garments sector, and individuals with diverse gender and sexual orientations.

To address these challenges icddr,b launched the Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AdSEARCH) by icddr,b project in March 2021, with support from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development (DFATD) until September 2025.

In the world of SRHR, AdSEARCH aims to advance knowledge, generate evidence, and influence policies and programs specifically focusing on various demographic groups with diverse SRHR needs in Bangladesh. The project's intermediate outcomes are expected to drive the ultimate outcome in the long term.

**ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE**

**GENERATING EVIDENCE**

**INFLUENCING POLICY AND PROGRAMME**

related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights by AdSEARCH

A comprehensive attempt to understand the SRH burden, diseases, and complications in Bangladesh through five cohort and surveillance studies.

One of the largest innovation hubs that have tested more than 20 SRH innovations as of February 2023.

One of the first studies in Bangladesh focuses on understanding the SRH needs of the key populations (KPs)

First attempt to design and develop a high-risk pregnancy and fistula register for Bangladesh.



**50+** Exclusive  
SRHR Studies

**20+** Innovation  
Study Funded

**18** Distinct  
Location

# Generating Evidence from Diverse SRHR Areas



## Adolescents

Menstrual hygiene, Sexuality and sexual health, Child marriage, family planning and Unintended pregnancy



## Fertility

Fertility preferences, Family planning methods, Postpartum family planning (PPFP), Unintended pregnancy, Pregnancy loss, MR, Post-abortion care (PAC), Infertility



## Maternal and Newborn health

Pregnancy complications: *Anemia, Jaundice, GDM, HTN disorder including eclampsia and pre-eclampsia,*  
Delivery-related complications: PROM, Prolonged labor, Obstructed labor, Prolapse, Fistula, and C-section



## Gynecological issues and sexual health

*Sexual behavior, STI/RTI/UTI, Reproductive cancer, Menstrual disorder and menopause*



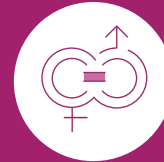
## **Sexual and reproductive health of Key Population (KPs)**

*Sexuality, Sexual behaviors and sexual concerns, Co-morbidities relating to SRHR e.g. STIs, HPV, RTIs, mental health, etc. Transgender health and rights, Sexualised drug use and its implications*



## **Nutrition among adolescents and pregnant women**

Adolescent nutrition,  
Pregnancy weight gain,  
Low-birth weight



## **Gender Equity and Equality and Rights**

Gender roles, norms, and gender disparities,  
Women's empowerment,  
Gender-based violence,  
Gender and rights of the key populations



**15**

Population based studies have under taken

**36+**

Month long data collection

## Conducting Community-based Research on SRHR Target Population

AdSEARCH's population-based studies are working to deliver a comprehensive insight into the needs, care-seeking practices, and programme coverage related to SRHR among various population groups. Epidemiological and social science studies have been undertaken to gain a more profound understanding of current issues. Evidence on SRHR burden and risk factors for 30-36 months will be collected from four sites of cohorts through multiple types of studies including Cohort study, Social science study, Facility-based surveillance, National health facility survey, Epidemiological study, Key Populations surveillance, and Innovation testing.

### Generating evidence from 5 Type of Cohort

Adolescents and young people

Newly-married couples

Key Populations

Pregnant women

Women in the RMG sector



**10**

Facility based studies have undertaken

**250+**

Health facility cover 40 district

**40**

District Cover

## Tracking, Assessing, and Evaluating Facility-based SRHR Services

AdSEARCH's facility-based studies attempt to enhance our understanding of the existing challenges and opportunities in facility-based SRHR services. To obtain a comprehensive view of the current state of SRHR services, a one-time national survey will be conducted using a representative sample of healthcare facilities. A specific demographic group will be identified and a facility surveillance system will be established. Regular assessments will be conducted to identify the availability, readiness, utilisation, and quality.

### Assessing health facility priority services of

Adolescent Friendly Health Services (AFHS)

Midwifery-led Care Services (MLCS)

Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance, and Response (MPDSR)

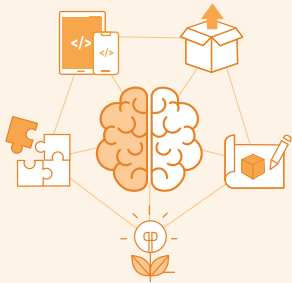
Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STI) health services

Menstrual regulation and Post Abortion Care Services (MR/PAC)

Cervical cancer screening

Key population-friendly services

Infertility services



**\$3M**

Funded for  
innovation

**20+**

Innovation study  
funded

## The Invention and Innovation Hub

Fostering innovation in the field of SRHR is one of the major goals of AdSEARCH, an innovation hub focused on developing and testing novel products to address the SRHR needs and challenges of diverse people groups, such as adolescents, women with maternal and newborn health issues, and the Key Populations (KPs).

The innovation hub covers a wide range of topics, including stress and performance of adolescent female athletes, psychological distress, and sexual health concerns among gender and sexually diverse people.

AdSEARCH is working on some bold ideas to develop innovative products, systems, apps, and analytics for diverse groups of the population, considering their SRHR needs.

### Addressing SRHR for the vulnerable group

- |                 |                               |              |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Female athletes | Young pregnant women          | Orphan Girls |
| RMG Workers     | Adolescents with disabilities |              |





## Apps & Analytics

AdSEARCH is focused on improving gender-specific and gender-friendly SRHR services through apps and analytics. It aims to develop a culture-sensitive intervention model, which will contribute to the Adolescent Orphan Girls' ability to claim their choices for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights knowledge.



## Testing Specific Innovations

AdSEARCH is testing a range of innovations, including birthing platforms that promote choices, a birthing mat, a thermal jacket, an SRH app for unmarried adolescents' health, and a chatbot that provides adolescent mental health support. These innovations have the potential to significantly improve SRHR outcomes for diverse populations and will be critical in addressing the SRHR challenges faced by these groups.



## Innovations from Young Researchers

AdSEARCH initiated a Call for Proposals for Proof of Concepts (POC) for innovation, and it received a multitude of bold ideas from young minds. After reviewing and scoring by experts, 11 proposals were awarded. These young researchers are addressing various topics such as female athletes during different phases of menstruation in Bangladesh, promoting peer communication, and facilitating digital capacity-building activities under the school-based adolescent health program in Bangladesh.



**10+**

Secondary analysis

**10+**

Systematic review

## Knowledge Translation and Communication

Knowledge translation can be defined as ‘the synthesis, dissemination, exchange and ethically-sound application of knowledge to improve health, health service delivery and the healthcare system.’ Every research is like a small step in progress. AdSEARCH focuses to convert research evidence and translate the knowledge into practical applications that insights that drive meaningful progress and lead to improved health outcomes.

AdSEARCH aims to use an adapted knowledge translation (KT) framework to ensure optimal use of findings and evidence on SRHR by the priority stakeholders (i.e., relevant ministries, implementing organisations, researchers, and research participants). As a process of Knowledge Translation, it synthesises results from research studies, and communicates and shares the findings for putting into policy and practice to ensure improved SRHR outcomes and impacts.

**Knowledge generation and distillation**



**Knowledge dissemination**



**Adaptation and implementation**

# Comprehensive SRHR Services by AdSEARCH

## Uddipto SRHR Counselling Centre

Uddipto provides comprehensive and individualised counselling services to women and adolescent girls facing SRHR-related issues. In addition, Uddipto is committed to promoting health education and has established a Standard Operating Procedure for its service providers. The centre trains counsellors to ensure the highest quality of care for its beneficiaries.

**2,300+**  
Counselling Service

**35,000+**  
Health Education

## The COVID-19 Lab Services

To support the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) in COVID-19 testing and ongoing monitoring of SARS-CoV-2 variants, the Virology Laboratory of icddr,b conducted investigations. It is one of the few in Bangladesh that has international accreditation to handle the SARS-CoV-2 and is capable of testing a large number of samples. Testing remains crucial as it helps to characterise the prevalence, spread, and contagiousness.

**54,500+**  
COVID-19 suspected cases tested  
from GoB sample collection

*\*\*till February 2023*

## The STI Services for Key Populations

STI Services under AdSEARCH have been designed to address the unique needs of KPs, providing free SRHR services that include treatment of STIs, referrals, and distribution of contraceptives.

The centre is committed to promoting safe sexual practices and providing professional counselling services as needed. It also operates in close partnership with government and non-government organisations to provide comprehensive rights-based services.

**10,000+**  
Episodes of SRHR Services

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# Collaborators


- Asian University for Women (AUW)
- Institute of Statistical Research and Training (ISRT), University of Dhaka
- Ipas Bangladesh
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists


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