

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

AdSEARCH BITES

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AdSEARCH Well-being Centres Reach 10K Patients

The tele-mental health “Well-being Centres,” an initiative of icddr,b, have served more than 10,000 patients since their launch in September 2022, expanding access to psychological care through video-conference counselling in rural Bangladesh by trained psychologists and psychiatrists. Since its inception, the centres have provided mental health support to a diverse group of patients. Data through March 2026 show that more than 74% of service recipients were female.

Global Affairs Canada, through AdSEARCH by icddr,b, has been supporting the seven Well-being centres in collaboration with the Non-Communicable Disease Control Programme under the Government of Bangladesh. The initiative has established tele-mental health facilities in public hospitals across Dinajpur, Netrokona, Chandpur, Noakhali and Sherpur districts. Despite the growing need, access to mental health services in rural Bangladesh remains limited due to a shortage of

Total number of service recipients from September 2022 to March 2026:

7,409

Female

2,617

Male

1

Transgender

10,027

Total

1,061

ANC

112

PNC

specialised professionals. The Well-being Centres aim to bridge this gap by connecting patients in public hospitals with trained psychologists and psychiatrists remotely, helping expand mental health care coverage across underserved areas. Experts note that maternal mental health is a critical public health concern. Maternal depression is associated with adverse

maternal health behaviours and can lead to developmental and psychological problems in children. Severe mental disorders during pregnancy and the postpartum period can also increase the risk of serious complications, including pre-eclampsia, hemorrhage, impaired fetal growth, stillbirth, and suicide.



I had a difficult childhood filled with fear, neglect, and physical abuse. Those memories stayed with me for years and led me to attempt suicide several times. After 16 sessions at the Wellbeing Centre, I can honestly say I have never felt this good in the last 15 years. I feel calmer, more in control, and hopeful about my life. Sometimes, a few words can save a life. For me, they truly did.”

- Jayed (pseudonym), 23-year-old student, Dinajpur



I am a doctor, dedicated to saving lives, but there was a time when I was mentally falling apart. After losing my first child, I struggled with fear, sleepless nights, and even tried to end my life during my next pregnancy. In time, I began my journey at the Wellbeing Centre, taking 12 sessions slowly and patiently. Over the next three years of follow-up, I gradually found peace again. Today, I am well. My child is now three years old, and I have even qualified for a higher degree.”

- A 33-year-old doctor, Dinajpur.



She was a 24-year-old new mother when she first came to us. Quietly distressed, struggling with fear, sudden tears, and disturbing thoughts she could not share easily. She spoke of unexplained tears, constant fear, and intrusive thoughts that terrified her: “What if I harm my own child?” Even thinking this made her tremble.

We supported her through counselling, medication, and eight steady sessions, allowing time and safety for healing. At follow-up, I saw her again with her baby resting peacefully in her arms, and a calmness that had slowly returned to her face.”

- Fatema Shahrin, Psychologist, Wellbeing Centre, icddr,b

To learn more about the AdSEARCH Wellbeing Centre

https://mchdweb.icddr.org/mental_health_support

Final Delphi Workshop on Endometriosis Register Held at BMRC



The final Delphi workshop for the development of the Endometriosis Register was at the Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC), Dhaka, under the AdSEARCH Project titled “Design, Development and Demonstration of Registers for Advancing the Management.” The initiative aims to strengthen the documentation and management of

endometriosis in Bangladesh. A diverse panel of 25 experts from clinical, academic, and government institutions participated in three rounds of Delphi scoring to finalise the variables and structure of the register. During the workshop, Dr Shafiqul Ameen Raiyan from icddr,b presented the final Delphi scoring results.

The workshop was attended by distinguished guests, including Sayeba Akter, Syed Kamrul Islam, Abu Hena Mohammad Raihanuzzaman, Kulsum Ara, Monjur Hossain, Marzia Haque; and Khurshid Jahan, along with other Delphi experts.

The experts highlighted that establishing a standardised Endometriosis Register will play a vital role in improving clinical documentation, patient management, and data generation for research and policy planning in Bangladesh.

Major Attendees (chronology as appeared in the news):

Dr Shafiqul Ameen Raiyan, *Assistant Scientist, icddr,b*

Sayeba Akter, *Chairman, BMRC*

Syed Kamrul Islam, *Director, Primary Health Care (PHC), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)*

Abu Hena Mohammad Raihanuzzaman Sarkar, *Deputy Director, PHC, DGHS*

Kulsum Ara, *Deputy Director, Management Information System (MIS), DGHS*

Monjur Hossain, *Assistant Director, Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP)*

Marzia Haque, *Director, MIS, DGFP*

Khurshid Jahan, *Deputy Director, MIS, DGFP*

Publication Alert:



Pregnancy loss in rural Bangladesh: an analysis of rates, proportions, timing, and determinants based on data from a Health and Demographic Surveillance System

Authors: Sahar Raza, Rajon Banik, Syed Toukir Ahmed Noor, Qazi Sadeq-ur Rahman, Farha Nusrat Zahan, Md Abu Bakkar Siddique, Md Mehedi Hasan, Tamanna Majid, Esrat Jahan, Abu Sayeed, Lubna Hossain, Saraban Tahura Ether, Afruna Rahman, Nafisa Huq, Shams El Arifeen, Anisuddin Ahmed, Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman

Journal: Journal of Global Health

Publication Date: 27 March 2026

Read More: <https://jogh.org/2026/jogh-16-04101/>

23-26 March 2026

AdSEARCH at the International Maternal Newborn Health Conference (IMNHC) 2026



The icddr,b Q-Mat was showcased at the Innovation Marketplace of the International Maternal Newborn Health Conference (IMNHC) 2026, held from 23 to 26 March 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya. The Innovation Marketplace served as a dynamic platform where transformative ideas in maternal and newborn health were brought to life. The selection followed a rigorous and competitive review process, underscoring the global relevance and scientific merit of the innovation.

Support through AdSEARCH, the study titled “icddr,b q-mat for Early Identification of Postpartum Haemorrhage in Low-Resource Settings,” focuses on advancing synergistic approaches for the early detection and management of Postpartum Haemorrhage (PPH), one of the leading causes of maternal mortality in Bangladesh. By enabling timely identification, the Q-Mat has the potential to significantly improve maternal health outcomes, particularly in resource-constrained settings. Study PI, Dr Sahar Raza, Assistant Scientist, Maternal and Child Health Division,

represented AdSEARCH at the IMNHC Innovation Marketplace 2026.


Moreover, Dr Shams El Arifeen, AdSEARCH Project Director and Co-Chair of the IMNHC 2026, in a separate presentation, highlighted icddr,b’s continued leadership in developing evidence-based, context-appropriate solutions for critical public health challenges. His presentation titled “Moving Forward, Together: A Showcase of Maternal and Newborn Health Measurement at icddr,b” specifically focused on icddr,b’s investment in measurement over the years and the plans to move forward.

IMNHC is a premier global forum that convenes researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and advocates to accelerate progress in maternal and newborn health and prevent stillbirths. This year, the conference also hosted 40 official country delegations, offering a dedicated Country Showcase session to exchange innovations, best practices, and lessons learned.

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