



# POLICY DIALOGUE SYNTHESIS REPORT

# STRENGTHENING URBAN HEALTH SYSTEMS: KEY ISSUES & TAKEAWAYS

## Background

The Community-led Responsive and Effective Urban Health System (CHORUS) is a research programme consortium that unites health researchers from Africa, South Asia, and the UK. It collaborates with communities, health professionals, and city-level decision-makers to develop and test strategies aimed at improving the health of the poorest urban residents. CHORUS and ARK Foundation hosted a Policy Dialogue Event on 30th January 2025 bringing together policymakers, health experts, CHORUS researchers, and external development partners. This event aimed to foster collaboration, discuss early findings from CHORUS research, and exchange ideas on how to strengthen the urban health system in Bangladesh. The discussions focused on *governance, coordination challenges, private sector and informal sector engagement, financial and human resource constraints, and health information systems*.

The event was supported by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), and was well attended by the representatives from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C) and both North and South City Corporations of Dhaka. This brief, documents key issues discussed in the policy dialogue events and provides take away messages.

## Key Issues

- Healthcare is fragmented due to lack of synergies between **MoHFW** and **MoLGRDC**.
- There is absence of coordination among public, private, NGO, and informal healthcare providers.
- **86%** of critical health positions are unfilled across urban areas.
- Urban residents bear **68.5%** of total healthcare costs, straining low-income populations.
- Lack of comprehensive **HIS** for **urban health**, hinder data-driven decision-making.
- Over **60%** of urban healthcare is **private**, with **no structured PPP** model.
- Large portions of the urban population **lack access to sufficient PHC** services.
- Shortages of **infrastructure, logistics, and trained staff** restricts services in urban clinics.
- Absence of a unified governing body to oversee urban healthcare leads to inefficiency.
- Phasing out of donor-funded projects leaves local governments unable to sustain services.
- Poor policy execution, lack of accountability, and fragmented healthcare services challenge effective service delivery.

## Key Takeaways

- **Governance & Coordination:** Poor coordination between MoLGRDC and MoHFW calls for a single governing authority and a cross-ministerial task force for streamlined policies and data-sharing.
- **Urban PHC & Funding:** The Urban PHC Programme covers only one-third of Dhaka South, requiring full authority for city corporations over PHC management and increased healthcare funding.
- **Workforce Shortages:** 86% of critical health positions are unfilled, necessitating urgent recruitment, training, and standardized medical protocols across municipalities.
- **Health Information Gaps:** Private and NGO health providers must share data for better policy planning, requiring a centralized digital record system and National Health ID.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** With 60% of healthcare private, a structured PPP model is needed along with regulatory frameworks and government oversight.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Every urban ward needs a PHC and maternity center to reduce hospital congestion, with funding to reintroduce urban dispensaries.
- **Financial Burden:** High out-of-pocket costs push the poor into poverty; subsidized NCD medications and strategic purchasing can reduce these costs

## Conclusion

The policy dialogue on strengthening urban health systems highlighted the urgent need for coordinated action across ministries, improved governance, and sustainable financing to address the growing challenges in urban healthcare. The discussions underscored the importance of integrating private and informal sectors, improving health information systems, and ensuring better access to primary healthcare, especially for marginalized urban populations. Moving forward, continued collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and local stakeholders is essential to implement the solutions identified and strengthen urban health systems, ultimately ensuring equitable and quality healthcare for all urban residents.

## Find Out More

- Read the full Policy Dialogue report: [ [click here](#) ]
- Watch the video highlights: [ [click here](#) ]

## Contact Us

For further information, please email us at:  
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## Useful Links

- **ARK Foundation:** [www.arkfoundationbd.org](http://www.arkfoundationbd.org)
- **CHORUS:** [www.chorusurbanhealth.org](http://www.chorusurbanhealth.org)

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