**Roundtable discussion on UHC and engagement of the civil society**

Bangladesh Health Watch (BHW) in collaboration with Chatham House and UNICEF hosted a roundtable discussion with the engagement of civil society actors working for the improvement of the health sector. The program was held on 14th September,2022 at BRAC University auditorium. The roundtable discussion was focused on the perspectives on opportunities, challenges, and priorities in health financing, human resources for health at the primary health care (PHC) level.

On that occasion, globally renowned public health professionals, representatives from UNICEF, and well-acclaimed think tank Chatham House were present.

Chatham House is an independent policy institute and well-known think tank, also known as Royal Institute of International affairs situated in London. Their purpose is to discuss emerging issues and Universal Health Coverage is one of them.

The event was welcomed by the convenor of Bangladesh Health Watch, Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury. The program started with the presentation of the key research findings from the PHC by Robert Yates, Executive Director of Centre for Universal Health at Chatham House.

Yates showed in his presentation a trend of govt spending in Asia. Thailand is an example in public financing in health.

“Delhi in implementing a PHC led UHC strategy. Which can be adopted by us.”, says Yates.

“The concept of public financing is important to bring changes in the health sector. Like India, we should introduce a health mode”, says a Professor Khandokar A Mamun, a public health expert.

All the public health experts nodded at one issue “Political Will” is important to bring changes to health sector.

Dr. AM Zakir Hussain, former director IEDCR said, “Though we are always saying that the budget spending should be increased, actually we couldn’t utilize the allocated portion actually. Our medicine cost is very high and diagnostic centres are fills will poor quality technicians.”

The discussion proceeded with the reflection of the key findings, and civil society perspectives on the current status of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) implementation.

On that occasion, Maya Vandenent, Chief of Health, UNICEF was also present. “We need to strengthen the community clinic so that the basic health services should be availed by the grassroot people.

Later, the discussant discussed the challenges faced by civil society working with policymakers and solutions. The experts talked about more collaboration and future ventures to explore.

The roundtable came up with several recommendations for ensuring Universal Health Coverage. The recommendations are i)priorities reaching full population coverage and meeting the needs of the poor and vulnerable, ii) increase public financing for health by and additional 1% GDP by 2025, iii)focus additional resources on primary care services, iv) launch a nationwide network of urban health clinics to address urban primary health care gaps, v) invest in strengthening key health systems-notably human resources, access to medicines and commodities infrastructure and governance.

The aim of the roundtable is to engage civil society on the key priorities, opportunities, and challenges for UHC implementation in Bangladesh. Since Bangladesh is committed to achieving Universal Health Coverage by 2032, this roundtable was a need of the minute.