STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 TO 2026

Main Report
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Background and Introduction

Bangladesh Health Watch (BHW) was established in 2006 as a multi-stakeholder civil society body dedicated to improve the health care system in Bangladesh through evidence-based critical review of policies and programmes, and recommend appropriate actions to be taken for bringing required changes. BHW's main activity until 2018 has been the publication of the well-recognized biennial BHW Reports, which identified the most critical challenges to the health sector at particular points of time and published insightful situation analyses leading to practical recommendations, based on evidence from existing and primary research reports. BHW engaged in the advocacy role, bringing the relevant issues of concern on the health care services to the policymakers, planners, and implementers. In December 2019, BHW decided to undertake more active advocacy to make a deeper impact on the health situation of the country in addition to publication of the Reports.

BHW has always been following certain strategies in its course of action. This current Strategic Plan (SP) also demonstrates the commitment of BHW to map out its future direction based on a well thought Strategic Plan.

This SP document has been developed by following a “Strategic Planning Framework” jointly developed by the external consultants and BHW's senior management. A number of steps were followed to give the SP a final shape. The findings and recommendations of the Mid Term Review (MTR) were taken into considerations which have helped to define the future strategies. As a part of the planning process, a two-day long workshop was organized during 26 to 27 December 2021. A SWOT analysis was done by the secretariat staff to understand the internal and external environment in which BHW operates. All aspects of SWOT were again looked into from two different perspectives like organizational and programmatic. As part of the process, BHW's Vision, Mission, and Core Values were revisited and rearticulated. The strategic issues, objectives, directions, and major activities were identified both for organizational and programmatic aspects. A Strategic Planning Implementation Committee is to be formed to track the progress of the SP time to time.
The objectives of the project are:

**Objective-1:**
To enable civil society platforms/individual voices to hold government and other stakeholders accountable to major health sector commitments.

**Objective-2:**
To carry out evidence-based advocacy to improve situation of quality of care, transparency and equity especially in hard-to-reach, poor areas, particularly for women and young girls.

**Objective-3:**
To enhance understanding of duty bearers on issues related to quality of care, accountability and equity.

BHW is currently implementing a three-year project called “Making Bangladesh’s Healthcare Systems more Responsive and Participatory” with the support of Swedish Sida. The project will be ended in 2022. A midterm review was conducted by two independent consultants Prof Dr Liaquat Ali and Dr Nazneen Akhter. The objectives of the MTR was to objectively evaluate the progress in the project’s output indicators, to document important lesson learned, and to make recommendations on how the services can be improved based on the findings the assessment.
The major findings and recommendations are as follows:

**Major Findings:**

As part of the review process, the consultants also identified the strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and challenges of the project and made some well thought recommendations in order to achieve the expected results of the project by the end of the project period.

It came out from the analysis that the said project is very unique in terms of “health-specific community empowerment” project in the country. The project has been able to create an alignment and engagement of a larger group of public health activists from among the professionals, social workers, senior level policy makers, opinion leaders, media and other relevant stakeholders. The project has also grown interest, attraction, and commitments among the local organizations to get involved with the project and act as Regional Chapter secretariats. The findings revealed that BHW has the required capacity and is making remarkable progress termed as “quantum change” in achieving the stated objectives of the project.

**Recommendations:**

The review report suggested to come up with a comprehensive “Advocacy Strategy” and giving more emphasize on evidence generation and health related data repository initiatives. The BHW Secretariat should be made more dynamic through a dedicated organogram and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) reflecting the objectives and requirement of the Project within the overall umbrella of the Parent Institute (the JPGSPH). Finally, it was recommended to revisit the “Result Framework” of the project with possible reformulation of the indicators to “achievable” ones within such a limited project period and, also, with an optional possibility of replacing the RFW itself by a Process related Framework which may better track the progress of the Project.
PESTEL Analysis

The political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal (PESTEL) analysis was done to understand the country context properly. Here are some highlights of the PESTEL analysis:

**Political:**
Democratic space to express different opinion is shrinking day by day. Intolerance to different opinion is increasing. Nothing happens without any connection with the power structure even in the private sector. There is less accountability and transparency in the public sector and expenditure.

**Economic:**
Bangladesh has demonstrated an impressive track record of growth and poverty reduction. International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its World Economic Outlook, 2018, has ranked Bangladesh as the 44th the largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP in 2017 and 32nd in terms of purchasing power parity. It has been among the fastest growing economies in the world over the past decade. GDP Growth Rate in Bangladesh is expected to reach 4.50 percent by the end of 2021, according to Trading Economics global macro models and analysts expectations. In the long-term, the Bangladesh GDP Growth Rate is projected to trend around 7.50 percent in 2022, according to our econometric models.

However, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The prices of the essential commodities are on rise. Poor people are struggling to cop up with the situation.

**Social:**
In case of education, Bangladesh has great success in enrolment and gender equality, but the quality in terms of grade level competency achievement is still a question. At present 4.3 million children aged between six and 15 years are still out of schools. The government has initiated a project called “Out of School Children” programme to address the issue.

The under-nutrition rate in Bangladesh is one of the highest in the world. Child feeding practices, insufficient breastfeeding, lack of food diversity, mental health and mothers’ nutritional health, food insecurity are the key factors of under-nutrition.

The incidents of non-communicable diseases are increasing alarmingly. The health expenditure is increasing day by day (67 percent out-of-pocket expenditure for health; BHW proposal to SIDA; October 2019). The health structure of Bangladesh is one the finest structures in the world but unfortunately the services are of poor quality and not poor friendly.

Women are among the poorest of the poor, especially when they are the sole heads of their households. Early marriage, dowry related violence is common in Bangladesh which is affecting the lives of many women.
**Technological:**

The government of Bangladesh has declared vision 2041 and one of the strategies to achieve the goal is digitization. Government is introducing ICT in different sectors like education, health, agriculture, etc. Mobile healthcare is one example of development innovatively using mobile technology.

Bangladesh’s public sector has been struggling to cover its vast urban population for healthcare. NGOs and private sector providers are stepping in to bridge this gap.

**Environmental:**

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world, which faces adverse impacts of global warming and climate change. Dhaka as well as local urban centers are mostly the destination of migration caused by climate change. Environmental degradation is happening rapidly.

**Legal:**

The NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) was established in 1990 to provide one-stop service to the NGOs operating with foreign assistance and registered under the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Ordinance, 1978. One of the major roles of the Bureau is to facilitate the activities of the NGOs and ensures their accountability to the state and thereby to the people of the country. However, it has been observed that their focus is more on controlling the activities of the NGOs rather than facilitation.
**SWOT Analysis: A Framework for Selecting Strategies**

**Internal Factors:**

The first two letters in the acronym, S (Strengths) and W (Weaknesses), refer to internal factors, which mean the resources and experience readily available to any organization. These are the factors where an organization has control.

**External Factors:**

The last two letters in the acronym, O (Opportunities) and T (Threats), refer to external factors, which means things that our organization do not have control over them.

**Internal Environment (Strengths and Weaknesses)**

**Strengths of BHW**

- Reservoir of experiences (Working Group and Advisory Group)
- Strong and capable secretariat
- Regional level partnership
- Good credibility/positive image
- Strong media connections
- Connections with other networks
- Hosted within JPGSPH
- Experience of managing research
- Commitment and leadership of the WG
Weaknesses of BHW

- BHW does not have a formal organizational structure.
- Different Culture/System between BHW and JPG
- Lack of institutional and financial sustainability
- Project based thinking/funding
- Inadequate engagement of AG and WG members
- Poor Branding of BHW

External Environment (Opportunities and Threats)

Opportunities for BHW

- Strengthening image through wider projection
- Recent South East Asia (SEA) PHC strategy adopted by GoB
- Interest among the stakeholder at regional level to work with BHW
- Digitization
- Building allies/partnership
- Engagement of diverse people/member in WG

Threats for BHW

- Declining trends of donor funding
- SIDA project ends in 2022
- Pessimistic attitudes towards NGOs/CSOs
- Gradual decrease of “Democratic Space”
- Institutional support from UGC, MOHFW, DGHS
BHW’s Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Vision:
All citizens of Bangladesh enjoy universal health coverage.

Mission Statement:
Building a functional platform through which citizens and all other relevant stakeholders of the country can get their voices heard and thereby influence policies and programmes impacting citizen’s health.

Core Values:
- Equity
- Voice
- Accountability
- Collaboration

Note: Organization core values may be prepared based on three principles: a) what the organization believes, b) what the organization practices, and c) what the organization are committed to promote. Keeping these principles in mind, BHW needs to carry out an exercise on these identified core values. The outcomes of the exercise should clarify: a) what is the meaning of each core value for the organization, and b) what are the implications of the values for BHW employees.
Way Forward

Organizational Strategic Issues

The major organizational strategic issues were identified as: positioning of organization, human resource development and organizational sustainability. Subsequently, strategic objectives, directions and major activities under each strategic direction were identified. Here it follows:

Strategic Issue - 1: Positioning of Organization (BHW)

Strategic Objective: Identifying and defining organizational identity/structure.

Strategic Direction: Maintaining present operational status of BHW (in the year 2022) and bringing required changes for making BHW a sustainable organization.

Major Activities:

- Expansion and strengthening of the WG and AG (retiring existing members and admitting new members; within next two months).
- Streamline the roles/responsibilities of WG, AG, and Secretariat.
- Prepare a functional constitution for BHW (by hiring a competent person who will work with one focal person from the WG; by June 2023).
- Explore further funding from different sources (bilateral donor, unconventional private sector funds, etc.).

BHW is hosted by BRAC University’s James P Grant School of Public Health which is one of the reputed public health institutes of the country. BHW considers this positioning as one the major strengths. BHW also gets a wide range of support from JPGSPH for smooth implementation of its activities. There is a scope for BHW to strengthen its image further by utilizing this opportunity where it is in now. Considering the situations, BHW considers this as a Maxi-Maxi strategy which can be fully capitalized to take the advantages of the external environment as well.
Strategic Issue - 2: Human Resource Development and Strategic Issue- 3: Organizational sustainability

Considering the present operational status of BHW, separate strategic directions and activities required for human resource development and organizational sustainability were not elaborately discussed. However, the “Organizational sustainability” issue has partly been addressed under the strategic issue “Positioning of Organization.” Moreover, BHW may think to focus further on these issues while revisiting the SP sometimes in 2023.

Programmatic Strategic Issues

The major programmatic strategic issues were identified as: advocacy and networking, operational approaches, and knowledge generation. Subsequently, strategic objective, directions and major activities under each strategic direction were identified. Here it follows:

Strategic Issue – 1: Advocacy and Networking

Strategic Objective: Improved and responsive health care service delivery system where the voices and needs of the citizens, especially, poor, women and vulnerable groups are reflected.

Strategic Direction 1.1: Undertaking and effectively utilizing outcome sensitive advocacy and networking strategies, tools and techniques for improving health care delivery system of the country.

Major Activities:

- Develop an advocacy and networking policy.
- Promoting collaboration with the reputed organizations known for quality advocacy works.
- Develop partnerships with government, regional chapters, thematic groups, NGOs/CSOs, major private sector actors, media, and scientific community.
- Organizing workshops/seminars on policy advocacy and networking.
- Widening national and international networking through on-line reviews of successful advocacy initiatives and interactions with advocacy groups at national, regional, and international level.
Strategic Direction 1.2: Community engagement and empowerment.

Major Activities:

- Strengthening the capacity of the Regional Chapters to monitor the health situation in their catchment areas.
- Strengthening the activities under the regional chapters towards sustainability.
- Utilizing the learning derived from the experiences of Regional Chapters.
- Advocating the relevant agencies of government to involve the community.
- Developing alliances with the local government officials.
- Utilizing results-based communication approaches, tools and techniques.

Strategic Direction 1.3: Conducting issue specific and evidence-based advocacy linking with the findings of the research reports conducted on the health care services by different agencies.

Major Activities:

- Prepare a list of advocacy issues based on the outcomes of the research reports.
- Identifying relevant research and assimilating their major findings.
- Undertaking collaborative research with public health institutes and other research organizations.
- Conducting post-research activities jointly with other organizations.
- Develop a post advocacy follow-up mechanism.

The participants of the workshop opined that it would have been better to consider this issue as two separate issues instead of blending them together. This is one of the pertinent issues which go strongly with BHW’s strengths and priority. BHW has gained vast and proven experience in this field. There is also lot of opportunities in the health sector to work in coming days along with other organizations who are also interested to work on health sector. In addition, this opportunity can also been tapped by building allies/partnership with other likeminded organizations. The strengths of BHW can be utilized by playing significant active role in the platform rather than being a passive member. Considering the internal strengths and external opportunities, the workshop participants think that this is a Maxi-Maxi strategy which BHW should follow in its next Strategic Plan period (2022 to 2026).
Strategic Issue – 2: Operational Approaches

Strategic Objective: Adapt and apply proven operational approaches in conducting advocacy.

Strategic Direction 2.1: Make balance between conformist and confrontational approach, lobbying or direct communication.

Major Activities:

- Prepare a priority list of issues for which advocacy will be conducted.
- Linking with the advocacy issues, prepare a list of primary and supporting stakeholders with whom advocacy need to be carried out.
- Mapping out relevant advocacy activities.
- Broader collaboration with likeminded partners.
- Establish effective collaboration with relevant public and private agencies.

Strategic Direction 2.2: Mobilizing community voice

Major Activities:

- Prepare a list of opinion leaders and key players in the community.
- Develop a communication strategy and approaches to remain connected with them for defined purposes.
- Use of social media both for disseminating and collecting messages (Face book, blogs, tweets, etc.).
- Practice a mechanism of reviewing and adapting appropriate approaches to gage the community people.

Strategic Direction 2.3: Moving from project approach to program approach.

Major Activities:

- Develop a sustained organizational structure of BHW.
- Develop a human resource plan for the organization based on the organizational structure.
- Mobilize fund for organizational sustainability.
- Develop/strengthen local support groups.
- Take initiative to generate crowd funding.
- Mobilizing endowment funding.
- Introduce and practice community level collaboration among the print and mass media.
BHW is guided by a team of experienced and dedicated high profile WG and AG who come from different backgrounds. BHW has strong connections with both print and electronic media and formed partnership/allies with other prestigious organizations in country and at regional level. It makes a balance between conformist and confrontation approach in its operational approaches. The approach seems to be appropriate in the current context of the country. BHW has gained remarkable experience in managing relationship with the stakeholders it works with. On the other hand, there are some threats in the external environment which needs to be avoided or minimized to continue the “Modus Operandi” that BHW follows now. The major foreseeable threats which may jeopardize the operations are the gradual decrease of donor fund and democratic spaces. So, keeping all these in mind, BHW considers this as a Maxi-Mini strategy that it has to be maintained during next phase of its operations.

**Strategic Issue – 3: Knowledge Generation**

**Strategic Objective:** A sustained system of generating and utilizing required information on health care service delivery is established and practiced.

**Strategic Direction 3.1: Generating evidence-based information through research.**

**Major Activities:**

- Facilitate research on relevant topics.
- Prepare a list of areas (on health care service delivery) for which information need to be generated or collected.
- Maintain and utilize a research reports archive on relevant topics.
- Arrange thematic compendium in the research repository of BHW.
- Prepare and disseminate short briefing notes of research reports.
Strategic Direction 3.2: Focusing on need-based reports of health care delivery services.

Major Activities:

- Publication of Bangladesh Health Watch report and wider dissemination of the contents of the report.
- Link the findings of BHW’s reports for advocacy initiatives.
- Prepare and publish user friendly policy briefs with evidence based findings and recommendations on topics related to quality of care, transparency, and equity.
- Expand diversity of audiences.

Strategic Direction 3.3: Strengthening the research repository system of BWH.

Major Activities:

- Review and update, if required, the current research repository system of BWH.
- Prepare and utilizing a prescribed guideline for the research repository system.
- Ensure wider publicity and utilization of research repository system of BWH.
- Upgrade current website which will have details about BHW, project updates, interesting and relevant information on the health sector.

BHW has been able to create a positive image in the constituency due to its contribution in the health sector of Bangladesh by taking up appropriate research topic and bringing the findings to the policy makers. BHW makes it available for all interested parties by creating a compendium in its website. This is also considered as one of the authentic sources of information for many other organizations. But again, the external environment may not be supportive to continue these good initiatives. Because in order to continue these activities, BHW needs support from different stakeholders like donors, relevant government departments, and other civil society organizations. BHW foresees a bit of challenges to minimize the impact of those external factors. Having analyzed different dimensions, the house thought that this is a Maxi-Mini strategy for BHW.
Implementation of Strategic Plan

This document has been prepared through a process of extensive and detailed consultation with relevant stakeholders. Once it is finalized, it must be endorsed by the WG members.

To make this SP a living document, the facilitators strongly recommend setting up a **Strategic Planning Implementation Committee** who will prioritize the issues and develop yearly operational plan and budget in order to implement this SP and review the plan every year. The Committee will sit at least once a year to review the progress, provide policy direction and necessary support to the WG. The committee may also sit and or call meeting with WG more than once a year based on emerging needs of the organization. The government of Bangladesh has finalized the 8th Five Year Plan (July 2020 – June 2025). One of the main responsibilities of this committee will be to analyse the plan, finding out the priority of the government’s health program, align the SP with that and take initiatives to tap the government resources and build strong partnership and network with different ministries/departments/directorates.
Report Compiled by

Prof. Md. Golam Samdani Fakir, PhD, SFHEA
and
Mohammad Abdur Rahman

BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University
6th Floor, Medona Tower,, 28 Mohakhali Commercial Area,
Bir Uttom A K Khandakar Road, Dhaka-1213, Bangladesh