
CONSISTENT EFFORTS IN ADVOCACY LED TO THE COMMISSIONING OF
BARGUNA HOSPITAL'S NEWLY BUILT 7-STORIED BUILDING



Background:

Barguna Sadar Hospital was upgraded to 250 beds from a 100-bed hospital in 2010 following the announcement of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Later, a seven-story building was constructed here. The new building was inaugurated also by Hon'ble Prime Minister in 2018. Department of Housing and Public Works handed over the building to the hospital authorities in June 2022. But the operation of the 250 bed Hospital could not be started due to a lack of recruitment of workforce and supply of medical equipment. According to the superintendent of Barguna Sadar hospital Dr. Md. Lokman Hakim, due to bed shortage, patients are being treated on the floor of the hospital ward, on the balcony, and even at the entrance of the old hospital. Due to poor infrastructure, the hospital authorities are struggling to provide healthcare to the patients. The suffering of patients and attendants would only be ended when the new building is commissioned, and quality healthcare is provided.

Initiatives by Barguna DHRF:

From its very inception Barguna District Health Rights Forum initiated many advocacy events to commission the new building for provide health services at the new Hospital. Several advocacy



Human Chain at Deputy Commissioner's Office on 19 May 2022



DHRF members handed over Memorandum to Deputy Commissioner of Barguna on 19 May 2022

meetings with the Deputy Commissioner of Barguna, and the district health authorities at different times with the demand of this issue were organised. But, till now health service delivery has not been started in the new building.

On 19 May 2022, Barguna District Health Rights Forum held a human chain followed by a rally at Barguna General Hospital Chattar to demand the recruitment of adequate workforce including specialist doctors, medical equipment and furniture, diet allocation for 250 patients and to start operation of 250 bed general hospital. (News link of this event: [উদ্বোধনের ৪ বছরেও হাসপাতালে শুরু হয়নি \(banglanews24.com\)](http://banglanews24.com))

On 03 April 2023, Members of the District Health Rights Forum and District Health Rights Youth Forum met the Director (Health) Dr. Mohammad Mahmud Hasan regarding various problems of Barguna Hospital especially demand to open the new building. President of District Health Rights Forum Mr. Hasanur Rahman Jhantu, along with members of DHRF and youth group attended the meeting. Earlier On 21 March 2023, Members of District Health Rights Forum and District Health Rights Youth Forum met Dr. Md. Lokman Hakim, Superintendent of Barguna Sadar Hospital on the same issue.



DHRF met Dr. Humayun Shahin Khan, Director (Health), Barisal Division.

On 11 November 2022, DHRF Barguna raised this issue to Professor Dr Ahmedul Kabir, Additional Director General (Admin) of DGHS who graced the BHW National Advocacy Meeting as chief guest. Civil Surgeon of Barguna also attended the program. Dr. Kabir praised BHW and DHRF for bringing micro-level health issues to the national level. He stated that the deployment of a new workforce is a policy issue and after recruiting new doctors and nurses new hospital will be started soon.



DHRF meeting with Dr. Md. Lokman Hakim, Superintendent of Barguna Sadar Hospital

On 20 July 2022, Barguna DHRF arranged a training on health reporting where 20 local journalists attended. The participants were requested to address the issue of the new hospital building. As a result, they wrote persistently, and the issue was covered by national newspapers and television news. Some of the News Links are as follows:

1. [এক বছরেও ভবনটি চালু হয়নি । প্রথম আলো \(prothomalo.com\)](http://prothomalo.com)
2. [১০০ বেড়ে ১২ লাখ মানুষের স্বাস্থ্যসেবা : নতুন ভবন চালু হয়নি উদ্বোধনের ৫ বছরেও : সংবাদ অনলাইন \(sangbad.net.bd\)](http://sangbad.net.bd)
3. [বরগুনা সদর হাসপাতাল : উদ্বোধনের ৫ বছর পরও চালু হয়নি নতুন ভবন \(dhakapost.com\)](http://dhakapost.com)
4. [উদ্বোধনের ৪ বছরেও চালু হয়নি বরগুনায় ২৫০ শয্যার জেনারেল হাসপাতাল \(dhakamail.com\)](http://dhakamail.com)
5. <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/bargunas-healthcare-crisis-2119565>

Barguna District Health Rights Forum is now planning to place a memorandum on this issue to Dharendra Debnath Shambhu MP, the Member of the Parliament of Barguna-1 constituency and would like to meet the hon'ble Health Minister Mr. Zahid Maleque, MP to advocate for this issue of opening and activating the new building of Barguna Sadar Hospital.

Some results of the advocacy initiatives:

- The outdoor, Digital x-ray unit and the dispensary has been shifted to the new building though the whole operation has not commenced.
- A total of 70 beds were installed in the new building.
- The security situation has been improved. As the building was not used for a long time, drug users and vagabonds frequently stayed around there after the evening. The building is now clean and free of them.
- The cleaning and garbage management situation has been improved. The municipality has provided 12 cleaners to the hospital.

THE RISE OF A REAL CITIZEN WATCHDOG PLATFORM.

Since its initiation in 2021 as a civil society platform, ‘Chapainawabganj District Health Rights Forum-DHRF’ committed to promoting the health rights of the citizen and to improving government healthcare services of selected healthcare facilities of their district, it has progressively been becoming a real “watchdog platform” to ensure equity and accountability in improving health services through citizen’s participation. The forum is now regularly visiting and monitoring selected government health facilities, meeting health authorities and service recipients, and arranging multi-stakeholder meetings (public hearings) aiming to raise citizens’ voices at regular intervals.

On 19 May 2023, A delegation of 10 members led by Professor Sultana Razia, President of the District Health Rights Forum, visited District General Hospital as a part of their citizen monitoring of the hospital’s healthcare condition. The team consisted of 7 representatives of DHRF and 3 representatives from the Health Rights Youth Forum. The day was Friday, the weekly holiday. The objective of the visit was to observe the situation of the services during a holiday.



DHRF members visit to the District Hospital

The team witnessed different wards and talked with the patients one-on-one about the services. Later, the team paid an advocacy call to the hospital superintendent Dr. Masud Parvez and discussed the issues they observed. The issues include seat and dietary shortage, breastfeeding room, diagnostics and pathology equipment management, cleanliness, and medical waste management etc.

Dr. Masud Parvez opined that such citizen’s monitoring activities would play a progressive role in improving the quality of health services. He said that considering the limited resources, it was hard to provide services to all the people in the district as per their needs. However, the government is trying its best to provide services keeping these two issues in mind: sincere efforts and accountability to the service users.

On May 28, 2023, Health Rights Forum and Nachol Upazila Health complex authority jointly celebrated Safe Motherhood Day in coordination with Upazila Health Rights Forum. The event’s objective was to create awareness of pregnancy risks and safe motherhood among the expected

mothers of the catchment area of Nizampur Community Clinic of Nachol Upazila. On the day 64 pregnant mothers were diagnosed with maternal health care and blood group. The majority of which were pregnant mothers belonging to ethnic minority groups. The active participation of Nachol Upazila's small indigenous community citizens was very significant. Since the citizen of those communities is primarily dependent on their traditional medical services.

Throughout the year, The Health Rights Forum regularly organises 'Face the public' to create opportunities for the service recipients of government health services and organises a human chain on specific issues like the increase of allocation for health in the Fiscal budget. Besides, the forum is working to promote health awareness programs like World Health Day, World Environment Day and International Noise Awareness Day.

Through their continuous efforts, the District Health Rights Forum has created a place of trust between service providers and service receivers. The members of the Youth Forum are regularly monitoring the service quality of hospitals and community clinics by collecting data and audio-visual content. The forum members analyze the data collected and consult with the healthcare provider authorities in their advocacy meetings. They are also active on social media.



DHRF members visit to the District Hospital

*CONSISTENT EFFORTS IN ADVOCACY BROUGHT EASE TO THE CHCP AT
HIS COMMUNITY CLINIC.*

Hijli Goppara (Nayagram) community clinic is one of the 4 clinics in Hatia union of Ulipur upazila of Kurigram district. Community Healthcare Provider (CHCP) has been providing regular health services to the poor citizen, especially to marginalized women and children of this community, despite having the least facilities like any seating arrangements for service providers or recipients. The service providers have to attend to the patients always by standing. Consequently, patients, especially expectant mothers, often have to go back if they have to wait long.

However, the situation has changed now. Thanks to repeated advocacy initiatives of Hatia Union Health Rights Forum and the youth forum, the concerned Union Parishad has come forward to resolve the problem and to develop community clinic services.

Members of the Youth Forum and Health Rights Forum of 6 No. Hatia Union are mindful of the health rights of the citizen. On a visit to the Hijli Goppara clinic, Hatia Union Health Rights Forum president Md. Razzakul Islam learned that patients, even pregnant women, were receiving medical care standing up as there was no chair or bench to sit on. The CHCP informed them that there was a shortage of furniture in their clinic for a long time. At first, CHCP and the community support group asked to resolve the issue by informing the health assistant and health inspector and later to the upazila health authorities, but all their endeavor remained futile. The authority informed them that it was not possible to provide furniture from their end.

Concerning this matter, Hatia Union Health Rights Forum organised a coordination meeting on 28 March 2023 at Hatia Hijli Nayagram Community Clinic where CHCPs of four community clinics of Hatia Union, members of the community clinic committee, Union Parishad representatives, and forum members attended. In the meeting, it was decided that the community clinic committee would inform the overall situation, including the lack of furniture, and would be asked for special assistance from the Union Parishad authority. In addition, if necessary, the Union Health Rights Forum will discuss the matter with the Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer (UHFPO) of Ulipur Upazila.

According to the decision of that meeting Union Health Rights Forum, along with the President of the CC Management Committee of Nayagram Hijli Community Clinic had several meetings with the Union Parishad Chairman, UHFPO and other concerned health authorities and sought necessary support. However, the UP member Mr. Md. Abdul Bari promised that he would work to resolve the issue properly at his own capacity.

On 24 April 2023, president of the Nayagram Community Clinic and member of Union Parishad Mr. Md. Abdul Bari, from his own funds, donated some chairs to the Clinic. The union Parishad also promised to supply some more furniture gradually in future.

Now, service providers can provide their medical services happily.

*"Empowering Women of Hatia Union with Awareness on the Prevention of
Pregnancy Risks."*

Hatia is one of the remotest Unions of Ulipur Upazila of Kurigram District. Thanks to the support of Bangladesh Health Watch and Solidarity, local concerned citizen formed Union Health Rights Forum and Health Rights Youth Forum to improve government health services in the community. Members of Youth Forum and Health Rights Forum of No. 6 Hatia Union are aware of the rights of the people, especially health rights of the citizen. They regularly visit government health centers to ensure health care for destitute and marginalized citizens, especially women and girls to ensure their access and availability of getting quality health care services that they are supposed to receive. As a concerned group, they regularly do citizen monitoring on management, services related issues of the government health facilities.

President of the Health Rights Youth Forum, Mr. Md. Mehdi Hasan, and other members regularly visited various health centers of Hatia Union and found that the pregnant mothers who receive the services from the facilities are not aware of the risks of pregnancy and they are not interested in coming to the health center to receive health services during their pregnancy.

Hatia Union Health Rights Youth Forum members made a plan to raise awareness of regular check-ups that a pregnant women should take. They planned to observe Safe Motherhood Day on 28 May 2023 at Hijli Nayagram Community Clinic. The youth forum decided to engage the Community clinic service provider and Upazila Family Planning Officer with the program and aimed to invite pregnant mothers of the catchment areas of the clinics of Hatia Union to create awareness of pregnancy risks and safe motherhood among them.

A preparation meeting was held and it was decided that the Upazila Health and Family Planning Office would participate and provide necessary healthcare support to the event. According to that decision, Safe Motherhood Day was observed on 28 May 2023 at Nayagram Hijli Community Clinic. The program was divided into two parts. In the first part, an awareness building discussion session was held where Dr. Md. Meherul Islam, Resident Medical Officer of Ulipur Upazila Health Complex delivered the issue regarding the importance of pregnancy risk reduction for expectant mothers. The issues include the important of 4 check-ups during pregnancy, regular ultra-sonogram, the dos and don't of a pregnant mother etc.

On the second part, a total of 62 pregnant mothers in the catchment area of Hijli Nayagram Community Clinic of Hatia Union have taken ANC and PNC check-ups and became aware of the risks of pregnancy. Now, they are regularly doing routine checkups at the community clinic.

Citizen's initiatives bring significant change in health sector in Netrakona

Since June 2021, the Netrakona District Health Rights Forum and Kendua Upazila Health Rights Forum, in collaboration with Bangladesh Health Watch, have been working as an active civil society organisations to enhance public involvement in improving government health services. They organised a multi-stakeholder meeting on December 20, 2022, attended by government health officials, service recipients, and local citizens. The forums frequently visited the hospitals and presented specific demands, including separate ticket counters for women, preventing pharmaceutical employees from accessing patient prescriptions, activating Breast Feeding Rooms, and relocating an ultrasound machine.

In response to these demands, the superintendent of Netrakona District Hospital established a separate ticket counter for women and pregnant women, resulting in improved service accessibility. The Upazila Health Officer prevented pharmaceutical staff from viewing patient prescriptions and reinstated Breastfeeding Rooms in hospitals. The District Hospital Management Committee facilitated the transfer of the ultrasound machine following the District Health Rights Forum's advocacy.



DHRF provided apron to the cleaners of Netrakona Hospital

The Youth Forum's Partho Pratim noted positive changes across multiple areas. Operation theatres were installed in four upazilas, the ultrasound machine of upazila hospital was relocated from the diarrhea ward to the pathological department, the Orthopedics department was relocated for convenience, and the district hospital introduced a computerized ticket counter and serviced the ECG

machine. Government Ambulances became more accessible, and queue management was enhanced with separate lines for third-gender, disabled, and Dalit individuals. These improvements were attributed to the active role of the Health Rights Forum and Youth Forum as vibrant civil society platforms.

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Youth-led Health Advocacy initiatives eases patients waiting time at Khagrachhari Hospital

The District Health Rights Forum comprised of respected civil society individuals of Khagrachhari hill district conducts social awareness activities to improve the quality of health care in Khagrachhari district. The members of Youth for Health Forum, a voluntary youth organisation, are very aware of ensuring people's health rights. They regularly visit hospitals to ensure the health care of the patients, especially women, and children, and seek services and support from providers on health care issues.

On November 10, 2021, the members of the Health Rights Forum visited the hospital and saw that female patients who came for treatment were waiting in long queues with their children in their arms. When asking the duty doctor, he acknowledged the shortage of chairs for waiting patients and said that he would inform the higher authorities about it.

The members of the District Health Rights Forum have discussed this issue several times in their monthly meetings. It was decided to follow up regularly and find a way to arrange adequate seats for the patients waiting in the hospital so that the patients get proper service from the district hospital.

According to that decision, a group of Health Rights Youth Forum members met the Resident Medical Officer and informed him about the issue, requesting him to take necessary measures urgently. The Resident Medical Officer assured the youth forum members that with the help of higher authorities, he would soon solve the problem of the shortage of seats for the waiting patients.

As a follow-up visit, on 25th February 2022, it was seen that a sufficient number of seats had been arranged for the patients in front of each doctor's room, and these seats are designated for freedom fighters, elderly, disabled, and female patients. Specifically mentioned. Khagrachhari District Health Rights Forum to fulfill some civic responsibility for the patients of their area.

Community clinics benefited from solar power in the hill area

Khagrachari District Health Rights Forum, since its formation in September 2021, has been conducting social awareness activities to improve the quality of health care in the district. This forum has been working diligently to improve the quality of health services in District Sadar Hospital and Upazila Health Complex and Union Level Community Clinics. As part of their program, on the occasion of the Safe Motherhood Day celebration on 28th May 2022, several leaders, including District Forum's President Sadhan Kumar Chakma met with the authority of Mahalchari Sadar's Dhumnighat Community Clinic of Mahalchari Upazila. Dhumnighat Community Clinic is located on the roadside in a beautiful place, but there is no electricity connection there. As a result, it was difficult to serve the patients in the dark and damp environment of the clinic.

On December 31, 2022, in the annual general meeting of the Jabarang organisation, the vice-president of the District Health Rights Forum, Angpra Marma, informed the Chairman of the Hill Zilla Parishad, Mangsuipru Chowdhury, about the predicament of the community clinics without electricity. The chairman promised to supply solar panels.

The members of the District Health Rights Forum later held a follow-up meeting with the Chairman of the Hill District Council regarding this issue. In the meeting, the Chairman installed one solar panel each in Dhumnighat Community Clinic and Kerenganala Community Clinic with a capacity of 50 watts through Mahalchari Upazila Parishad Vice-Chairman Md. Jasim Uddin.

At present, the service providers working in the clinics and the patients receive services under the solar light. President of Dhumnighat Community Clinic Management Committee and Gram Karbari Karmachan expressed appreciation to Tripura Health Rights Forum and Chairman Hill Zilla Parishad for the initiatives.