

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR GENDER, SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (CGSRHR)

Established in 2008, The Centre aims to promote a broader understanding of gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Bangladesh and in the region through research, policy, advocacy and training activities. Using both academic and action-based research, the Centre generates knowledge and translates it into advocacy-based action for social change. Research topics under the Centre include HIV/AIDS, reproductive health service, gender-based violence, child marriage, digital tools for SRHR, bodily rights and behaviour change communication.

To promote SRHR, the Centre organises and conducts short trainings and courses that aim to stimulate critical thinking and reflections among practitioners. The Centre also facilitates advocacy efforts with various partners and networks to bring about greater awareness on relevant areas of SRHR work. Recent advocacy efforts have addressed SRHR and law, masculinity and men's sexual health, and rights-based issues of minorities and disadvantaged communities.

RESEARCH PROJECTS ONGOING IN 2021 *(updated till September, 2021)*

- COUNTERING BACKLASH AND RECLAIMING GENDER JUSTICE

PI: Professor Sabina Faiz Rashid, Dean and Director, CGSRHR, BRAC JPGSPH.

Coordinator:

- Ishrat Jahan, Research Associate; BRAC JPGSPH.
- Aisha Siddika, Senior Researcher, BRAC JPGSPH.

Timeline: October 2019 -2024

Objective:

- Understanding the backlash against women's rights and gender justice;
- Addressing the erosion of gender agendas, their co-option and its stereotyping effects;
- Advancing new opportunities for women's movements and rights defenders to reclaim gender justice;
- Enhance the understanding and capacities needed – and identify opportunities – for women's rights organisations and other gender justice defenders.

Methodology: Qualitative

Donor: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

Partners: Leading institute - Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

Partner countries/ regions - India, Brazil, UK, Kenya, Uganda and Middle East regions.

- **MOBILISING FOR A RESEARCH REVOLUTION TO ENSURE LGBTIQ INCLUSION IN ASIA: A HIGH-IMPACT, TRANSFORMATIVE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP (MFARR-ASIA)**

PI:

- Professor Sabina Faiz Rashid, Dean and Director, CGSRHR, BRAC JPGSPH.
- Peter Newman (University of Toronto)

Co-PI:

- Farhana Alam, Assistant Director, CGSRHR, BRAC JPGSPH;
- Selima Sara Kabir, Assistant Research Coordinator, BRAC JPGSPH;
- Maruf Rahman, Research Assistant, BRAC JPGSPH.

Coordinator: Maruf Rahman, Research Assistant, BRAC JPGSPH.

Timeline: November 2019 - March 2024

Objectives:

- To generate a shared understanding of characteristics and priorities of LGBTIQ inclusion in six sectors: education, employment, family, violence/security, health and political participation;
- To measure and monitor LGBTIQ inclusion in four countries (India, Thailand, Bangladesh and Hong Kong) over time;
- To identify model programs and initiatives, and good practices to support LGBTIQ inclusion;
- To increase access to and use of knowledge by community-based organization (CBO) and intergovernmental organization (IGO) partners through innovative knowledge mobilization, including participatory video.

Methodology: Mixed method

Donor: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Partners:

- Oboyob: Diversity Circle
- Bandhu Social Welfare Society

- **BRAC – DISRUPTING CROSS BORDER TRAFFICKING NETWORKS IN JASHORE, BANGLADESH**

PI: Farhana Alam, Assistant Director, CGSRHR, BRAC JPGSPH.

Co-PI: Md. Tanvir Hasan, Associate Professor and Co-Director, CUEH, BRAC JPGSPH.

Coordinator: Sophia Kaufman, Project Coordinator, BRAC JPGSPH.

Technical Advisor: Professor Sabina Faiz Rashid, Dean and Director, CGSRHR, BRAC JPGSPH.

Focal: Farhana Alam, Assistant Director, CGSRHR, BRAC JPGSPH.

Timeline: November 2019 - April 2021

Objectives:

- To conduct formative research during inception to understand the gaps and barriers that might inhibit effective CBT programming in Jashore;
- To conduct operational research (in close coordination with monitoring teams and the digital monitoring system) to understand how and why the project is able to achieve objectives or not, and inform fast adaptations and improvements on how to move to scale effectively;
- To conduct baseline and end line surveys and evaluation reports to understand project performance against the project results framework.

Methodology: Mixed method

Donor: Children Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) – UK

Partners: Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)

• **A Mixed-Methods Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial of Biometrically Enabled mHealth System of BRAC Community Health Programme**

PI: Md. Tanvir Hasan, Associate Professor, and Co- Director CUEH, BRAC JPGSPH.

Co- PI: Professor Zahidul Quayyum, Professor and Co-Director CUEH, BRAC JPGSPH

Focal person: Adrita Kaiser, Assistant Coordinator, BRAC JPGSPH.

Timeline: March 2021- December 2021

Objectives:

- To evaluate the impact of a biometrically enabled mHealth (Simprints) system on selected maternal and child health outcomes in 36 districts of Bangladesh where BRAC HNPP provides services to the beneficiaries.
- To conduct a cost analysis of the biometrically enabled mHealth system in improving maternal and child health outcomes in the 36 selected districts, and assess the cost and consequence of the intervention.
- To explore, if the “Simprints” system contributes to an efficiency gain in the overall management and monitoring of health care of BRAC HNPP programme in providing maternal and child health services in 36 districts of Bangladesh.
- To explore perceptions and understandings of the SKs about potential benefits (if there is any) of the biometrically enabled mHealth system in delivering services.
- To assess service satisfaction, perceived usefulness and other non-health effects of biometric programme and biometric technology acceptance among the beneficiaries in the intervention and control areas.

Methodology: Mixed method research

Donor: Simprint/ BRAC Health, Nutrition and Population Programme (HNPP)

Partner: BRAC Health, Nutrition and Population Programme (HNPP)

Grant Amount: USD 52,423

- **A BASELINE STUDY OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES (WGWDs) FACING VIOLENCE IN SELECTED AREAS OF BANGLADESH**

PI: Md. Tanvir Hasan, Associate Professor, and Co- Director CUEH, BRAC JPGSPH.

Technical Advisor: Professor Sabina Faiz Rashid, Dean and Director, CGSRHR, BRAC JPGSPH.

Co-I and Focal:

- Md. Uzzal Chowdhury, Senior Statistician, BRAC JPGSPH;
- Fatema Akter Bonny, Research Associate, BRAC JPGSPH.

Timeline: July 2020 - August 2021

Objectives:

- To explore the knowledge & awareness about SRHR issues, level of violence experienced by the women & girls with disabilities (WGWDs);
- To explore the coping strategies adopted by women & girls with disabilities;
- Identify the gaps in currently implementing interventions and/or services, and to recommend strategies to improve delivery of efficacious interventions and/or services.

Methodology: Mixed method

Donor: UN Women funded through Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)

Partners:

- The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF), Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- BRAC JPGSPH, BRAC University.

- **DEVELOPMENT OF INTEGRATED NUTRITION MESSAGES FOR SCHOOLS**

PI: Professor Kaosar Afsana, BRAC JPGSPH.

Other Researchers:

- Dr Malay Mridha, Professor and Director, CNCND, BRAC JPGSPH;
- Saira Parveen Jolly, Senior Research Fellow, BRAC JPGSPH;
- Abu Mohammad Shamim, Associate Scientist, BRAC JPGSPH;
- Fahmida Akhter, Senior Research Fellow, BRAC JPGSPH;
- Barnali Chakraborty, Assistant Scientist, BRAC JPGSPH.

Timeline: August 2020 – March 2021

Objective: The study aims to develop integrated nutrition messages for the school-going children (pre-primary to grade 10) using the cover pages of the school textbooks.

Methodology: Mixed methods

Donor: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

- **URBAN HEALTH INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2021: HEALTHY, SAFE AND INCLUSIVE CITIES**

Project Lead: Bachera Aktar, Assistant Director, CGSRHR, BRAC JPGSPH.

Coordinator: Afsana Yeamin, Research Associate, BRAC JPGSPH.

Timeline: January - May 2021

Objective: Urban Health Innovation Challenge 2021 aims to look for low-cost youth-led, local-level solutions for addressing limited access to SRH services and increasing sexual harassment among adolescents and youths living in slums

Objective:

The Urban Health Innovation Challenge 2021 aimed at discovering new methods, approaches, and solutions for addressing two significant hazards in urban slums: 1. Limited access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and youths in slum areas and 2. Increasing sexual harassment/sexual abuse to adolescents and youths in the slums. The contest was looking for solutions relevant to the given context, cost-effective, easy to implement, and effective to support the adolescents and youths living in urban slums.

This contest has created a platform for university students and youths from marginalized populations to transform their ideas into reality and solve social problems. In total 42 teams submitted their ideas whereas 6 teams were from different urban slums of Dhaka city and 1 team was from diverse population consisting of transgender and intersex youths. Through the final round of the contest; champion, first runner up and second runner up teams have been identified. All top 3 teams' ideas are currently in the primary phase and need field testing before scaling up implementation into the urban slum communities.

Donor: World Vision Bangladesh

Partner: Urban Programmes of World Vision Bangladesh

• **DISABILITY INCLUSION IN PANDEMIC RESPONSES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: CAPTURING NARRATIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN BANGLADESH**

PI:

- Shahreen Chowdhury, Research Assistant, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM)
- Fatema Akter Bonny, Deputy Research Coordinator, BRAC JPGSPH.

Co-I/Focal:

- Salma Akter Urme, Research Assistant, BRAC JPGSPH.

Timeline: March 2021 – September 2021

Objective:

- To capture and understand the individual experiences of people with disabilities and caregivers during COVID-19 in real time across two different LMIC settings.
- To explore perceptions, needs and the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities and how this varies based on intersecting axes of inequity e.g. gender, poverty and socioeconomic status.
- To highlight areas that need to be prioritised and considered from the perspectives of people with disabilities to ensure more equitable responses to health systems shocks as a result of emerging infectious disease

Methodology: Qualitative (Photovoice and key informant interviews)

Donor: The Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (RSTMH)

Partners:

- London School of Tropical Medicine
- NUOD (National Union of disabled)
- BRAC JPGSPH

- **RESEARCH ON GLOBAL HEALTH, EQUITY AND RIGHTS: DIGITAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS**

PI: Professor Sabina Faiz Rashid, Dean and Director CGSRHR, BRAC JPGSPH

Co-PI: Farzana Misha, Assistant Professor, BRAC JPGSPH

Timeline: September 2021-August 2022

Objective: The project brings together anthropologists, human rights lawyers and global civil society networks for shared research, youth empowerment work, and policy engagement to promote human rights-based governance of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) in health. .

Through participation in the Digital Health and Rights Project consortium:

- Analyze laws and policies, train junior researchers, and identify youth leaders from Bangladesh and Colombia to participate in transnational youth activist networks;
- To use legal and policy review and ethnographic research to develop case studies in Bangladesh and Colombia,
- To participate in developing policy recommendations that address human rights risks and opportunities linked to digital technologies and artificial intelligence in health.

Methodology: Qualitative

Donor: OSUN

Partner: The Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies (IHEID), BRAC University (BRAC) and the Universidad de los Andes (Andes)

- **OUR VOICES, OUR FUTURES**

Coordinator: Farhana Alam, Assistant Director, BRAC JPGSPH; Maruf Rahman, Research Assistant

Timeline: 2020-2025

Objective:

- Our Voices, Our Futures (OVOF) is a global South-led consortium, comprising CREA, the Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality (AFE), the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), UHAI – The East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative and WO=MEN. Consortium partners are complemented by strategic partner IM-Defensoras, a Mesoamerican women’s human rights defenders (WHRDs) organization. BRAC JPGSPH is working with CREA as a national level partner in this project.
- OVOF will amplify voices and increase the visibility of structurally silenced women in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Sudan and Uganda (alphabetically named), resulting in structurally silenced women taking their rightful places in civic space and participating across three key spaces: online space, physical public space and legal and policy space. OVOF is unique among myriad interventions targeting gender equality and women’s rights because it specifically aims to achieve the inclusion of structurally silenced women within broader feminist movements, where fragmentation has led to the historical exclusion of structurally silenced women even, at times, from feminist movements themselves.
- OVOF aims to uplift women who are structurally silenced due to their gender identity and/or their chosen form of labour (such as sex workers, working online and on-ground) and/or their activism (women human rights defenders or WHRDs). This structural silencing is systemic and by design, as global civic space is being actively narrowed and intentionally degraded by state actors as well as by non-state, anti-gender and anti-rights forces. OVOF work will defend and expand this civic space, online and on-ground. It will build capacities of feminist movements and actors to engage in policy and lawmaking, and advance gender equality to demand their rights.

Methodology: Qualitative

Donor: CREA, India

Partner: SPaRC, Oboyob