



# Accountability and Responsiveness in Informal Settlements for Equity (ARISE)



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**TIMELINE:** December 2018 - February 2024

## PARTNERS:

- Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), UK
- Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK
- Institute of Health and Wellbeing, University of Glasgow, UK
- The University of York, UK
- BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University
- The George Institute for Global Health, India
- Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI), Kenya, India, and Sierra Leone
- African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), Kenya
- Liverpool VCT Health (LVCT Health), Kenya
- Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC), Njala University, Sierra Leone
- College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS), Sierra Leone

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The [ARISE](#) Hub (Accountability and Responsiveness in Informal Settlements for Equity) is an interdisciplinary multi-country research consortium, launched in January - 2019, that aims to address the intractable development challenge of ill-health, inequity and insecurity in informal

urban settlements in Low and Middle Income Countries in the context of complex and often dysfunctional governance arrangements. This research consortium is funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) programme with support from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and consists of ten partners from five countries in global South and North. This project is working with the most marginalised dwellers in informal urban settlements in Bangladesh, Kenya, India and Sierra Leone to support them in identifying their priorities, making their conditions visible to key service providers related to health to develop better mechanisms for accountability and more responsive services. Innovative community-based participatory research methods are used to gain a deep understanding of health risks, vulnerabilities, and priorities and service access barriers to co-produce knowledge and evidence and to inform policy and practice responsive to improve health and wellbeing of the marginalised people living in informal urban settlements.

## EVIDENCE GENERATION

ARISE Bangladesh partner BRAC JPGSPH conducted COVID-19 research to understand and document the lived realities and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic among the residents of six informal urban settlements in Dhaka city. Other published [research](#) details the stress, anxiety (related especially to hunger), gendered differences in experience and increasing levels of violence women experienced during the pandemic. This research broadens understandings of risk, identifying a lack of wellbeing (rather than just of disease) and argues for relief packages that respond to multiple livelihood and

economic insecurities. Further documentation of the effects of the pandemic, to be published imminently, (Rashid et al, in press), examines how lockdown severely affected those engaged in the informal sector and/or daily wage earners. The [interactive GIS maps](#), co-produced by ARISE researchers with community people from ARISE working areas (3 slums in Dhaka city), reinforced by the gaps and limitations of global and national mapping sources, which do not include informal settlements. Co-production of spatial knowledge for research in data-sparse environments have also been appreciated by the community people as they can visually see the available services and service gaps in their areas, which they think will help them to negotiate with the service providers and city authorities for claiming the services they need. Through [stakeholder workshops](#) and regular meetings, we updated the governance actors and policymakers (ie. Mayors, Chief Health Officers and Slum Development Officers of both Dhaka North and South City Corporations, and local government actors - Ward Councilors and Ward members) regarding the marginalised community's needs and experiences to inform and influence their city planning. These meetings also serve as a platform for informal settlement residents to have their voices heard and the governance actors to communicate with the community directly. [This helps both community and governance actors to realize the health and wellbeing related needs of the community.](#)

## IMPACTS OF ARISE WORK

### At local level

- In partnership with BRAC Urban Development Programme (UDP), ARISE project is targeting to reach approximately 44,745 population in five slums in three cities (Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi) with participatory research and community engagement activities to empower the community with research evidence.
- ARISE has been playing a significant role in addressing the needs communities identified in various community engagement meetings and stakeholder meetings.
  - To promote health and hygiene practice among the residents of informal urban settlements, the following supports were provided to the residents of three slums in three cities.
    - \* Re-usable masks were distributed among 25,000 people
    - \* Soaps & hand washing powder were distributed among 6,000 families
    - \* 12 hand washing devices were installed
    - \* Nearly 368 people have benefited from the health camps.
  - Research conducted by BRAC JPGSPH with community co-researchers highlighted the challenges facing by urban marginalised people to access the online vaccine registration system developed by Bangladesh Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. With the financial and technical



support from ARISE, BRAC UDP arranged special COVID-19 vaccine registration camps and [a total of 237 people have been registered for Covid-19 vaccination \(see tweet\)](#) and the initiative aims to reach 22,892.

- This project has so far provided capacity strengthening to nearly 70 members of community support groups in leadership and negotiation skills to enable them to represent their communities in planning fora with formal governance actors. Community support group members have also been trained in COVID-19 awareness raising, along with both female and male ward councillors to promote co-production of knowledge and strategies.
- COVID-19 awareness messages have been disseminated among 450 families through 30 community meetings.
- ARISE has also been supporting in community's capacity strengthening and lining them to different opportunities. ARISE community co-researchers and youths from the ARISE study sites participated in the [Urban Health Innovations Challenge 2021](#), a competition for generating youth-led community-centric solutions, organised by BRAC JPGSPH and World Vision Bangladesh. The ARISE Bangladesh team at BRAC JPGSPH supported them in developing their solutions, including with analysing problems, conceptualising their project, and writing proposals for improved access to sexual and reproductive health services and sexual harassment prevention in their slums. The team from Kollyanpur won the second runner-up position and received a prize money worth 15000 BDT (~170 USD). This team presented their idea to the Mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation, Chief Health Officer of Dhaka South City

Corporation and high officials of World Vision Bangladesh at the [Prize Giving Ceremony](#) on 9th June 2021 demonstrating reach and ability to facilitate meetings and dialogue with policy makers and governance allies and within forums.

### At National level

- ARISE findings contributed to BRAC's strategic COVID-19 responses in rural and urban communities.
- ARISE researchers provided technical support to BRAC UDP in co-production of interpersonal communication (IPC) materials on COVID-19 awareness - posters, leaflets, calendars to distribute among the residents of urban slums. With the financial support from the ARISE project, BRAC UDP developed, printed and distributed those IPC materials in three slums in three cities.
- Guided by the evidence generated from the ARISE research, ARISE Bangladesh team at BRAC JPGSPH is also supporting BRAC UDP in their systems strengthening, for example, with the support of ARISE researchers BRAC UDP is trying to develop an online inter-slum cross-learning platform which will help communities in different slums to interact with each-other and exchange their learnings and experiences. BRAC UDP is currently pilot testing this platform.
- Since the inception of the project the ARISE Bangladesh team has been maintaining a strong network with governance actors – Mayors, Chief Health Officers (CHO), Slum Development Officers, and other relevant officials of Dhaka North and South City Corporations. The team has been holding regular meetings with these government officials to share evidence generated from the ARISE project.
- The ARISE Bangladesh team has also organised meetings with local governance actors including male and female Ward Councilors and different NGOs in December 2020 to discuss the needs of the marginalised communities from ARISE evidence.



### At Global level

- ARISE Bangladesh organised an international webinar titled "COVID-19 impact on urban informal settlements: vulnerabilities, challenges and responses" in May 2020 where urban researchers and experts from Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, Kenya and India shared and discussed vulnerabilities, challenges and responses of the urban informal settlement dwellers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Link: <https://www.ariseconsortium.org/prioritising-the-vulnerable-in-covid-19-response-low-and-middle-income-countries/>
- ARISE partners co-produced [a video](#) on community based participatory research (CBPR). The video has been used across all partners at the local level and within teaching and conferences nationally and internationally. It has been downloaded nearly 600 times and well circulated on twitter.
- BRAC JPGSPH researchers co-authored two papers on ARISE safeguarding approaches. The first paper was published in [BMJ Global Health](#) and has been downloaded 3932 times (June, 2021). We have also submitted a second paper (also to BMJ Global Health) detailing our adaptation to the changing contexts and vulnerabilities brought by COVID-19.
- ARISE actively participated in the development of the widely cited UKCDR Guidance on Safeguarding in International Development Research, providing actors in the international development research process with a set of principles and best practice guidance on safeguarding. In March 2020, a companion piece to the UKCDR guidance- [https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/010420-UKCDR-Safeguarding-Companion-Piece\\_Practical-application-of-guidance-during-COVID-19.pdf](https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/010420-UKCDR-Safeguarding-Companion-Piece_Practical-application-of-guidance-during-COVID-19.pdf) which draws upon and references ARISE work and thinking on safeguarding.
- ARISE researchers have also worked with TDR at WHO to produce a toolkit and associated supporting materials to strengthen the capacity of researchers focused on infectious diseases of poverty research to apply intersectional analysis within their work. The tool's innovative methodological approaches draw on learnings and case studies developed within ARISE.
- ARISE Bangladesh researchers co-authored a good number of cross-country papers and some of them published prestigious international peer review journals (see list below).
- ARISE Bangladesh produced two video documentaries depicting the lives in urban slums which have been used as teaching learning tool in JPGSPH's MPH programme as well as in other international platforms by ARISE partners.
  - \* The women of Shyampur and Bhasentek talk women's empowerment. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cr8Czk3BvkY&t=22s>
  - \* Living in Urban Informal Settlement: A Glimpse of Life in a Slum in Dhaka City. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ffe5YQN0XII&t=6s>

- Presentations in the 6<sup>th</sup> Global Symposium of Health Systems Research
- Dr Sabina Faiz Rashid was a speaker in one of the sessions titled, 'Establishing a socially just response to COVID-19 from the vantage point of urban informal settlements' in the HSR 2020 Global Symposium. [Link:https://hsr2020.healthsystemsresearch.org/program?fbclid=IwAR3wqYZJLPR-agKIONV1-muU3qJOqzzavMye01g-RMUXymbAS\\_xJRsg1R8E](https://hsr2020.healthsystemsresearch.org/program?fbclid=IwAR3wqYZJLPR-agKIONV1-muU3qJOqzzavMye01g-RMUXymbAS_xJRsg1R8E)
- Bachera Aktar presented on 'Understanding challenges and complex dynamics of urban informal settlements in Bangladesh: Learning from ARISE project' in the session titled, 'Urban informality and life at the margin' in the HSR 2020 Global Symposium. Link: [https://hsr2020.healthsystemsresearch.org/program?fbclid=IwAR3wqYZJLPR-agKIONV1-muU3qJOqzzavMye01g-RMUXymbAS\\_xJRsg1R8E](https://hsr2020.healthsystemsresearch.org/program?fbclid=IwAR3wqYZJLPR-agKIONV1-muU3qJOqzzavMye01g-RMUXymbAS_xJRsg1R8E)
- Dr Sabina Faiz Rashid was a speaker in one of the sessions titled "Digging into urban health: uncovering concepts and action for health and social justice in informal settlements". Link: [https://hsr2020.healthsystemsresearch.org/program?fbclid=IwAR3wqYZJLPR-agKIONV1-muU3qJOqzzavMye01g-RMUXymbAS\\_xJRsg1R8E](https://hsr2020.healthsystemsresearch.org/program?fbclid=IwAR3wqYZJLPR-agKIONV1-muU3qJOqzzavMye01g-RMUXymbAS_xJRsg1R8E)

## PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- Towards a socially just model: balancing hunger and response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh, BMJ Global Health 2020; 5: e002715. <https://gh.bmj.com/content/5/6/e002715>
- Slum Health: Arresting COVID-19 & Improving Well-Being in Urban Informal Settlements. Journal of Urban Health 2020, J Urban Health <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32333243/>
- 'Most at risk' for COVID19? The imperative to expand the definition from biological to social factors for equity, Published in Preventive Medicine, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32763263/>
- Solidarity and universal preparedness for health after covid-19, BMJ 2021; 372 doi: <https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n59> (Published 22 January 2021)
- How to prevent and address safeguarding concerns in global health research programmes: practice, process and positionality in marginalised spaces. <https://gh.bmj.com/content/5/5/e002253.long>

## UNDER REVIEW

- Sabina Faiz Rashid, Bachera Akhtar, Nadia Farnaz, Sally Theobald, Samiha Ali, Wafa Alam, Kim Ozano (June 2020), Fault-lines in the Public Health Approach to Covid-19: Recognizing Inequities and Ground Realities of Poor Residents Lives in the Slums of Dhaka city, Bangladesh, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3608577](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3608577)
- Book Chapter: Scarcity and resilience during Covid-19: invisible lives of adolescents and youth in urban slums in Dhaka City, Bangladesh (in press). Book Title: Viral Loads - Anthropologies of urgency in the time of COVID-19 edited by Lenore Manderson, Nancy J. Burke, and Ayo Wahlberg. Link: <https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/176694>

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- Research Brief: Impact of COVID-19: Lived Experience of Urban Poor in Slums during Shutdown. Link: [https://covid-bracjpgsph.org/front/covid/assets/files/research/brief/Urban\\_%20Poor%20Lived%20Experiences%20in%20Slums%20ARISE\\_April%2019\\_final%20brief%202020-min.pdf](https://covid-bracjpgsph.org/front/covid/assets/files/research/brief/Urban_%20Poor%20Lived%20Experiences%20in%20Slums%20ARISE_April%2019_final%20brief%202020-min.pdf)
- Blog: 'Experiences of conducting research in an informal settlement' <https://www.ariseconsortium.org/conducting-participatory-research-informal-settlements-korail-bangladesh-challenges-entry-positionality/>
- Blog: 'Now women run the show": Equality or Illusion?' <https://www.ariseconsortium.org/women-run-the-show-now-equality-or-illusion/>
- Blog: 'Youth Associate: A light of hope for Dholpur slum residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.' <https://www.ariseconsortium.org/youth-associate-dholpur-slum-residents-covid-19-pandemic/>
- Blog: 'Remote GIS mapping in Dholpur: Co-production with co-researchers' <https://www.ariseconsortium.org/remote-gis-mapping-in-dholpur-co-production-with-co-researchers/>
- Blog: 'Reflections and dilemmas: My visit to an urban informal settlement' <https://www.ariseconsortium.org/reflections-and-dilemmas-my-visit-to-an-urban-informal-settlement/>
- Blog: 'Normal' or 'New Normal': Life in urban slums amid the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.ariseconsortium.org/normal-or-new-normal-life-in-urban-slums-amid-the-covid-19-pandemic/>
- Supporting communities in the COVID-19 pandemic: ARISE community researcher experiences <https://www.ariseconsortium.org/2021/07/>