

# NEWSLETTER



**Guests round-up at the photo gallery**  
Photo Courtesy: Ipas Bangladesh



**Volunteers of the photo-voice initiative**  
Photo Courtesy: Ipas Bangladesh

## Silent Frames Loud Voices: Photovoice Exhibition Unveils Community Stories, Driving Social Change

The Photovoice Exhibition on "Silent Frames Loud Voices" was an evocative event organized by Ipas Bangladesh and SERAC Bangladesh along with other implementing partner organizations- BAPSA, OGSB and RHSTEP under the Improving SRHR in Dhaka project funded by Global Affairs Canada through HealthBridge Foundation. Held at an Art Gallery in Dhanmondi on 30 January 2024, the exhibition showcased 26 captivating photo stories on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), curated by dedicated youth volunteers from the local communities. The event attracted a diverse audience, including government officials from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRDC), development partner Global Affairs Canada, international NGOs, media representatives, partner organizations, youth volunteers, and community members.

The photovoice initiative aimed to provide a platform for individuals within the community to voice their concerns, highlight their perspectives, and drive positive changes. Ipas

### Message from

### COUNTRY DIRECTOR

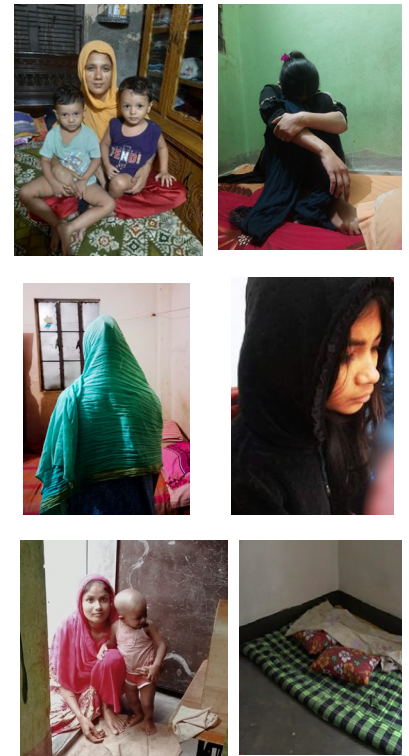
*"Women and girls in Bangladesh face numerous challenges in accessing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services. Quality SRHR services are insufficient, and gender-based violence and stigmatized attitudes worsen the issue. Ipas Bangladesh is dedicated to improving this situation by strengthening health systems, fostering partnerships, and using innovative approaches. Our gender-transformative strategy and horizontal leadership are making us more resilient and effective. Through these efforts, we aim to ensure that every woman, regardless of her socioeconomic status, has access to comprehensive and high-quality SRHR services."*



Dr. Sayed Rubayet  
Country Director  
Ipas Bangladesh

ACHIEVEMENT

Bangladesh tends to empower marginalized groups and influence the decision-making process on SRHR. Ipas Bangladesh provided technical support for the event, assisting SERAC Bangladesh in organizing training for youth volunteers in photography and storytelling techniques. These volunteers then ventured into their communities and collected approximately 50 photos depicting challenges of SRHR services as well as sexual and gender-based violence issues faced by women and adolescents living in low socio-economic urban areas of Dhaka. Selected 26 photographs with stories were exhibited. The powerful images and stories that embody personal narratives shed light on the current SRHR situation, and the obstacles encountered by women and adolescents living in underserved urban areas of Dhaka. Stakeholders and guests in attendance lauded the initiative and were deeply moved by the narratives presented. The Photovoice exhibition not only served as a means of artistic expression but also as a catalyst for social change and awareness surrounding critical reproductive health issues like MR, PAC and contraceptive services including sexual and gender-based violence in urban low socio-economic areas. Ipas Bangladesh aims to leverage these compelling Photovoice stories to further advocate for improved SRHR outcomes in the region.



HIGHLIGHT

## Exploring Collaboration: Islamic Foundation and Ipas Bangladesh's Workshop on SRHR

Participatory session of the workshop  
Photo Courtesy: Ipas Bangladesh



comprehensive reproductive health education. The workshop aimed to forge a strategic partnership among DGFP, the Islamic Foundation, and Ipas Bangladesh to promote SRHR interventions. This partnership seeks to integrate Islamic perspectives to ensure wide recognition and implementation across Bangladesh, from local communities to the national level.

The Islamic Foundation is actively participating in Ipas's humanitarian program to raise awareness about sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Imams from the Islamic Foundation educate Rohingya imams on the importance of family planning. As part of the SBBC initiatives, these imams address misconceptions using their Islamic knowledge.

**O**n March 25, 2024, Ipas Bangladesh and the Islamic Foundation held a planning workshop in Dhaka. The goal was to plan joint efforts on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including family planning (FP), tackling gender-based violence (GBV), and providing

## A Shared Journey of Concern: From Despair to Hope

STORY

When the young woman Rukhsana (pseudo name) arrived at the Kutupalong health facility, accompanied by her old mother, the midwife on duty noticed the woman's distress right at that moment. A former teacher at the camp's school, Rukhsana revealed that her husband had started abusing her six months into their marriage and eventually abandoned her, leaving her pregnant and overwhelmed. Isolated and judged by neighbors, she felt trapped.



Rukhsana (pseudo name)  
Photo Courtesy: Ipas Bangladesh

midwife provided counseling on MR, family planning, gender-based violence, and mental health support, assuring her of confidentiality. Reassured, Rukhsana agreed to the care she needed and returned home with the CHW's support, ready to move forward.

A caring Community Health Worker (CHW), trained by Ipas, noticed her struggle and informed her about safe menstrual regulation (MR) services at the center. During her visit, the

Rukhsana's case story is not unique. In humanitarian settings, the unmet need for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services is high. With support from a UNFPA-funded program, Ipas Bangladesh is dedicated to ensuring that every woman and girl, like Rukhsana, has access to essential SRH services.

## Ipas Bangladesh's All-Inclusive Approach on International Women's Day 2024



Volunteers from the Free Health Camp



Field activity of the volunteers



Women's Day celebration at Cox's Bazar field office



Women's Day celebration at Dhaka office

Photo Courtesy: Ipas Bangladesh

Ipas Bangladesh celebrated International Women's Day 2024 with the theme "Inspire Inclusion," pledging to invest in women's rights and progress. Staff from Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, and Bhasanchar, along with partners and donors, participated. Volunteers from the Improving SRHR in Dhaka project organized community sessions, health camps, and a sticker campaign, reaching 305 people in low-income areas with information on women's rights, family planning, and SGBV prevention. Nationally, the CSO Forum showed support through social media.

OBSERVANCE

## Annual planning workshop for SRHR advancement in Dhaka



Photo Courtesy: Ipas Bangladesh

The Project Management team, Community Access team, Health System team, and senior advisors from Ipas Bangladesh facilitated the planning sessions for the next year in the presence of all project staff from the implementing partners - BAPSA, RHSTEP, OGSB, and SERAC

**W**ith the presence of key figures from the government, donors, and stakeholders, the Improving SRHR, Dhaka project organized a three-day Annual Workplan Development Workshop from March 5th-7th, 2024. As the ISRHRD project steps into its fourth year of implementation, the objective of the event was to share the progress up to year 3, discuss the challenges, and identify ways forward to achieve the project's outcomes and expected results.

Bangladesh. During the event, the project staff presented and analyzed the progress up to year 3, reviewed the challenges, and proposed strategies for effective implementation of year 4 interventions to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs of the project. Based on the proposed activities, a budget was prepared for Ipas Bangladesh and the implementing partners. proposed activities, a budget was prepared for Ipas Bangladesh and the implementing partners.

ACTIVITY

## CSO forum is challenging the Discriminatory Female Dormitory Provisions

**W**hat if you or someone you care about is forced to leave their dormitory by a rule just because of their marital status and pregnancy? It is unfair, isn't it? Unfortunately, these discriminatory provisions are well-established in some of the reputed public universities in Bangladesh. To solve this overlooked unfairness, the CSO forum is challenging the existing provisions.

The Civil Society Organization (CSO) Forum for strengthening the sustainable SRHR ecosystem in Bangladesh is working for advocacy and establishing equal rights in Bangladesh. In response to discriminatory dormitory policies at public universities, they issued letters to university authorities and protested Jagannath University's notice to married and pregnant female

**"Such discriminatory provisions and its implementation in residential halls are very worrying and condemnable"**

-Dr Sayed Rubayet  
Convener of CSO Forum and  
Country Director, Ipas Bangladesh

**From the Press Release**



ADVOCACY

students. This gained nationwide attention through a comprehensive press release. Seven members filed a PIL in the Supreme Court, leading to a rule nisi directing a response by February 7, 2024. The forum also engaged the National Human Rights Commission and reaffirmed their commitment in a March 4, 2024 meeting. The CSO Forum awaits responses from authorities and calls for unity in ensuring equal treatment for all university students, regardless of gender identity. relevant authorities, they urged everyone working for the cause of human rights to stand united in the pursuit of equal treatment for all university students irrespective of gender identity.



## Polymakers Embrace VCAT

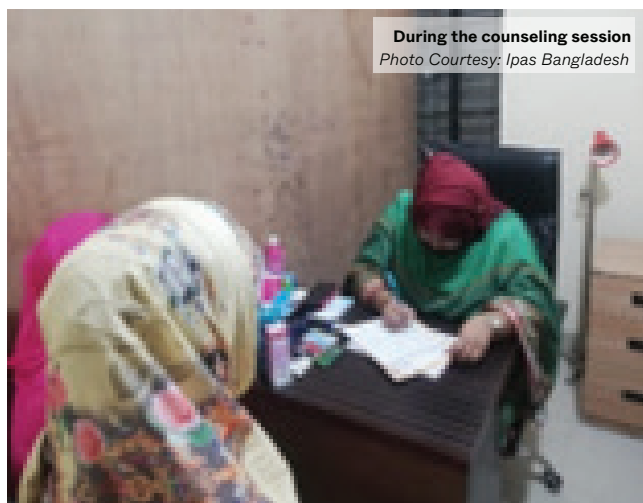


Ipas Bangladesh integrates the Values Clarification for Action and Transformation (VCAT) tool to support Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) programs. Through

collaboration with policymakers and stakeholders, Ipas aims to break barriers and empower individuals to access essential reproductive healthcare,

including menstrual regulation (MR), with dignity. Ipas recently organized a VCAT workshop involving senior officials from the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP). This workshop, held on January 31, 2024, engaged 19 DGFP attendees and encouraged them to align personal beliefs with professional obligations to ensure safe MR service delivery. DGFP officials acknowledged the effectiveness of the VCAT tool and expressed plans to incorporate VCAT training for service providers in the Government's upcoming Operational Plan (OP). They emphasized the importance of NGO assistance in capacitating service providers regarding MR services. Integration of the VCAT tool empowers policymakers to challenge stereotypes and promote positive attitudes towards safe MR services in Bangladesh. This enhanced understanding facilitates their efforts in areas such as legislation, resource allocation, education, advocacy, and collaboration, ensuring effective action towards SRHR goals.

## General Physician's Commitment to Quality MR Care



***“...since the community people came to know about the availability of MR, PAC, FP services in the chamber, I have been getting more and more clients from the slum areas for MR and mPAC services. The training helped me significantly to learn the standard protocol of MR service. I am happy to serve such underprivileged women with safe MRM and mPAC services”.***

- GP Dr Anowara (a pseudonym)

**D**r. Anowara (pseudonym) is a general physician (GP) working in a low socio-economic area near a slum in Dhaka. Many underprivileged women come to her for menstrual regulation (MR) services, but she lacked formal training in MR procedures and guidelines.

To improve her skills, Dr. Anowara learned about the training initiatives under Ipas Bangladesh's 'Improving SRHR in Dhaka' project from her fellow doctors. The Obstetrical & Gynecological Society of Bangladesh (OGSB) is a project partner that organizes the training with technical support from Ipas Bangladesh. Dr.

Anowara expressed interest in the training and was selected by the project team after an assessment. She then attended a comprehensive six-day clinical training program covering MR with medication (MRM), MR with post-abortion care (mPAC), and modern family planning (FP) methods.

Through this training, Dr. Anowara acquired the necessary skills and knowledge. Now confident in her expertise, she proudly offers safe and quality MR and mPAC services at her clinic, ensuring underprivileged women in her community receive proper care.

## Navigating Funding Challenges

**B**angladesh is facing big changes in its development funding, which needs attention and adaptation. As the country is set to leave its least-developed status in 2026, foreign funding is dropping. NGO commitments have fallen by nearly 30%, from \$1.03 billion in the previous year to \$720 million in FY23. This drop, along with the narrative of self-sufficiency, creates challenges for local, national, and international NGOs. Western donors are shifting their support away from Asia to conflict-ridden areas in Europe, the Middle- East, and North Africa, making the situation worse. If funding continues to drop and no new sources are found, progress towards sustainable development goals (SDGs) could be slowed, consequently affecting general people. Keeping steady funding for NGO operations is essential for continued progress.

To tackle these challenges, building strong relationships with donors for long-term funding is key. It can be achieved by fostering a sense of community among donors, personalizing communication, and treating donors as valued partners. This approach enhances donor loyalty and builds lasting relationships that sustain support. Additionally, diversifying funding sources is crucial. Engaging with new bilateral and multilateral donors is key to securing funding through government or similar systems. Improving organizational skills to match donor needs, and working with local NGOs are important steps to increase the funding stream. Furthermore, seeking donors for projects in multiple countries, improving credibility through publications, and using social media to reach more people are some other strategies to attract more funding support.

BLOG

## Shared Leadership in Practice Practicum held for Ipas Bangladesh Team



**T**he in-person training on Shared Leadership in PAN in-person training on Shared Leadership in Practice was held on February 10 to 14, 2024 in conjunction with Ipas Bangladesh's Annual Review and Reflection Meeting. The event saw active participation from all Ipas Bangladesh staffs, reflecting a strong commitment to embracing Shared Leadership, the organizational philosophy underpinned by Ipas's core value of interdependence. Shared leadership broadly distributes authority and responsibility through "Going Horizontal" approach within the entire organization, maximizing its strengths by

TRAINING

empowering individuals to take leadership roles in their areas of expertise. The training module was meticulously crafted around the seven domains of Horizontal Leadership: Autonomy, Purpose, Meetings, Transparency, Decision making, Learning & development, and Relationships.

Moving forward, Ipas Bangladesh plans to implement the key tools and concepts derived from this training throughout its operations. Finally, the Training on Shared Leadership was instrumental in equipping Ipas Bangladesh staffs— with the necessary tools and insights to embrace a more inclusive and decentralized leadership model.



**Our impact in this quarter**

**At Ipas-supported health facilities-**

**64,308** People received Family Planning services

**19,813** People received Menstrual regulation service

**40,205** People received Post Abortion Care service

**1,797** People received support on Sexual and gender-based Violence

**Through community engagement programs, Ipas Bangladesh reached-**

**114,126** Bangladeshi people

**15,804** Rohingya people



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