

Opinions of the Participants of the Key Informant Discussions about the Health Care Services in Rural Bangladesh: A Case Study of Savar Thana

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we describe the opinions of the key informants (Thana Nirbahi Officer, Thana Health Assistant and Family Planning Officer, Residential Medical Officer, Principal of a College) to assess the health care services in Bangladesh (Location on: Savar Thana) provided in the government and private facilities. Their responses were analyzed with a view to formulating recommendation that could result in improvements in the quality of care and increased use of the services offered at such health (government and private) centers.

Key words: Health service, key informants, Government health facility, Private health facility

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a country of 130 million population (in 2002), squeezed in an area of 147,570 sq. km. The nation was born in 1971 with a population of 73 million, growing at 2.5% per year. Sixty-five percent of the adult population of Bangladesh is illiterate, including 78 percent of the adult women. Eighty percent of the population is still living in rural areas, but only 31 percent of the rural households own more than one acre of land and 28 percent of households have no land which can be cultivated at all.

Compared to many developing countries, Bangladesh has a dynamic and innovative health sector and the country's experience with operation research concerning health and family welfare services is one of the most extensive in the world.

Primary health care services can be characterized by their availability, accessibility, utilization, coverage, quality and impact of particular concern in a country like Bangladesh, ensuring that quality primary health care services reach those most in need, namely, the poorest, least-educated and geographically most-isolated members of Bangladeshi society. A major change in rural health service delivery was introduced in Bangladesh under the government's five-year sector program (1998–2003) (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 1997). Health security has improved most of the population, but the government's overall health expenditures are not directed at securing poor people's health. The poor are more prone to illnesses than the non poor, irrespective of sex or other social indicators. Marginalised groups continue to face strong barriers to access a corrupt public health care system and are forced to attend private clinics. The rich always get priority and better facilities (<http://unpan1.un.org>). Very recently, we have studied the Focus Group Discussion's with eight groups about the government and private hospitals (Jahan et al., 2005). We also carried out Logistic regression

analyses in government and non-government patients to identify the factors which have influence on the duration of suffering of the clients (Jahan et al.,(in press)).

The key informant method is based on obtaining information, over time, from a community resident who is in a position to know the community well. The person or persons selected to be key informants must therefore have a broad knowledge of the community, its services and its people. Key informant interviews are interviews with people who have a special position in the community and are looked upon as representatives of the opinion and experiences of a whole group. They often see the problems of a group rather than of an individual, making them a very useful group of people. In this field four persons took part in the discussion. Three of them are in the superior position in the society and in terms of experience they represent entire group of a community. The four respectable persons who took part in the discussion are:

1. R.M.O. (Residential medical officer)
2. T.H.A. (Thana health assistant) and F.P.O. (Family planning officer)
3. Principal of a college
4. T.N.O. (Thana nirbahi officer)

CHOOSING THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE KEY INFORMANTS

R.M.O.

R.M.O. remains present in the hospital for all times and serves the patients. So he knows very well

How many patients come to the hospital for treatment,

What are their problems ,

Whether he can get them proper treatment,

If not why he is unable to do so,

What steps should be taken to provide proper treatment to the patients.

In fact, the R.M.O. has been chosen because he knows the health problem of the patients, the problem of medical equipment and how to solve the problems.

T.H.A. and F.P.O. has been chosen because of the following reasons:

He is the chief of a government hospital. The responsibilities of running these hospitals smoothly lie entirely with him. He knows very well the patients face with what problems in taking health care in this hospital and what steps should be taken to remove these problems.

The principal of a college:

The reasons of selecting the principal of a college:

He is the chief of a college and a teacher. He has some idea about the people of his locality. We went to him to know about the health problem of the people of his locality. In order to know what kind of medical facilities people are getting and what measure should be taken to improve these facilities, he has been selected.

The T.N.O. has been selected for the following reasons:

Generally, T.N.O. is the chief administrator of the thana. He has all kinds of information about the health problem of his locality. All the employees including the doctors and nurses of the thana get salary through him. He knows very well what kinds of medicines are distributed in different hospitals, the health problem of the general people and its remedy. He can answer well to the questions of the patients. He can also visit the hospital to find out the problem relating to health.

IMPORTANT FINDINGS OF THE KEY INFORMANTS ABOUT HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Table 1. Questions and answers of the key informants.

Question No.	Questions	Participants	Answers
1	Generally, what kinds of health problem do you and the people of your area face? Where do the people of this locality go to get health care if there is any health problem?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	• No comment • Diarrhoea, skin diseases, peptic ulcer, eczema, pneumonia • Diarrhoea, chill, tumor, and indigestion • Bronchitis, asthma
2	Where do the people of this locality go to get health care if there is any health problem?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	• 1. The poor go to the govt. hospital as they have no ability to go to the private clinic. • 2. The rich do not go to the govt. hospital as they think that standard of treatment in govt. hospital is very low. • Generally the poor go to the govt. hospital and the rich and conscious people go to the private clinic. • 1. The poor go to the govt. hospital • 2. The rich and conscious people go to the private clinic. • 3. Some people take medicine according to their own decision. • 4. Rich people (about 10% people of Saver) get treatment in different clinic in Dhaka. • Poor people go to the govt. hospital and the solvent people go to the private clinic.
3	Do you think that the system of treatment in govt. hospital is complete or satisfactory? If not what is the reason behind it?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	• The system of treatment is not complete because of a) There is no specialist b) Want of modern medical equipment even there is no arrangement for operation. • The system is incomplete because of a) Want of medical equipment b) Govt. cannot provide money properly c) Want of sufficient medicine. • The system of treatment is incomplete because of a) Doctor is not available all time b) There is no scope of pathological test c) Medicines are to be bought from outside of the hospital. • The system is not complete because of a) Doctor does not only attend the patient attentively but also thinks when he will go to the private clinic

Question No.	Questions	Participants	Answers
			b) Want of specialist in govt. hospital c) Doctors have become more commercial. If I open my month doctors will go on strike from tomorrow. d) The doctors are butcher. The doctors who have large number of patients demand high fees from the patient. • All the respondents think that the socio-economic condition of the people of this area is under-developed
4	How do you think about the socio-economic condition of the people of this area?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	• 1. Private clinics take the opportunity of the govt. 2. Some clinics have well and standard treatment. 3. Some clinics provide below-standard treatment
5	How is the treatment service of private clinic of this area?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	• 1. Private clinics are not well where treatment cost is high but service is not well. 2. Clinics seem to be jail. • Private clinics demand much money than their treatment cost. • The service of treatment is up to standard.
6	What steps should be taken to get satisfactory treatment service in govt. hospital?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	• 1. Health budget of our country should be raised. 2. The supply of medicine of govt. at every four months is not sufficient. 3. The govt. should supply sufficient medicine to the govt. hospital. • 1. The public are not giving taxes in health sector. Every person is giving a taka. How can we hope to get proper treatment from the govt. hospital? 2. Sufficient number of medical equipment should be supplied. 3. The public should be conscious about their right to get proper treatment from govt. hospital. • 1. The service of treatment should be standard. The supply of medicine should be sufficient. The service of doctor should be increased. 2. There should be specialist doctors and supply of medicine should be sufficient. 3. Health care at the union level should be raised. 4. People should be aware of prevention of disease. Regarding this matter cinema should be shown in cinema halls, towns and villages. Hygiene should be included in school syllabus.

Question No.	Questions	Participants	Answers
			5. Emphasis should be given on family health clinic. 6. The consciousness of people on health care should be raised through T.V. and Radio. 1. The doctor should bear in mind, "to serve the patient is to serve the humanity." They should give proper time in the hospital. 2. There must be a service rule stating that the doctors of govt. hospital will never be allowed to do part time job in private clinic. 3. The private clinics should not appoint those doctors who are employed in govt. hospital.
7	What will happen if fee system is introduced in govt. hospital? How can be fee system Introduced in govt. Hospital?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	- Doctors can attend patient private taking fees taka 100-200 per patient. 20% of the fees will go to the govt. fund. These attempts were made several times. The political leaders may take this as an issue. - Fee system may be introduced. The patient can enter the govt. hospital buying ticket of 10 taka from outdoor. This will improve the treatment system. - Fee system can be introduced in govt. hospital. Patient can pay 25%–30% fees of the doctor in the govt. hospital. Then the doctor will try his level best to save the life of the patient. - The wish of the doctor works here mainly. Fee will not do all the things. The doctor will have to remember that their job is a humanitarian job. They work for the sake of humanity, not sake of earning. It is their occupation and it is their aim of life to serve the sick.
8	What is your opinion about the behavior of the doctors?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	- The doctors of govt. hospital do not examine patients properly. They have want of patience. - No comment - The doctors behave according to the status of the patient. As I am a principal, they behave well with me. 1. The doctors of govt. hospital are not hopeful. They do not only examine the patient in the hospital but also tell them to go to private clinic for different tests, x-rays, ultra sonograms which are almost not needed for the patient. 2. Comparatively the behaviors of the doctors of private hospital or clinics are much better than that of govt. hospital.

Question No.	Questions	Participants	Answers
9	What are the facilities of the govt. hospital?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	1. The cost of treatment is very low. 2. The poor patients can get medical facilities easily. 1. Govt. hospitals are good for first aid. The hospitals are not properly neat and clean. 2. The patients get much cleanliness than their homes. • Medical facilities can be got at low cost. • Basically there is no facility in the govt. hospital.
10	What are the difficulties of the govt. hospitals?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	1. There is heavy load of patients, about 300–400 patients come to the outdoor daily. 2. The number of patients is so high that the doctors can not be hundred percent sincere. 3. There is no emergency doctor. 4. The patients have to remain standing in long line. 5. The patients have to face harassment for admission. 6. The doctors show negligence in fixing the date of operation. • 1. There is no arrangement for big operation. 2. There is no FCPS consultant. 3. There is no necessary medical equipment. 4. There is no big budget. 5. There is no sufficient medicine. • 1. There is no sufficient medicine. Medicines are to be bought from outside. 2. In emergency, doctors are not available. 3. Generally doctors do not remain in the hospital after 2 P.M. 4. Pathological facilities are not available. 5. There is no specialist in the hospital. • 1. Dirty, unhygienic atmosphere prevail in the hospital. 2. Sweepers and assistants do not work properly. 3. Doctors, nurses and other employees do not work attentively, because they get regular salary at the end of the month. 4. They have no fear of losing the job. 5. The standard of service is very low.

Question No.	Questions	Participants	Answers
11	What are the facilities of the private hospitals and clinics?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	1. In private hospitals and clinics any kind of medical service is available at any time. 2. Medical service is up to date and up to standard. 3. Medical equipment is well. - All kinds of medical facilities including first aid are available for all times in the private clinics. 1. Medical treatment is available then and then. 2. Modern medical equipment is available. 3. There are experts and specialist doctors. 1. Medical treatment is up to standard. 2. Environment is neat and clean. 3. Doctors, nurses and other employees are very sincere and attentive to their work.
12	What are the difficulties of the private clinics?	a. R.M.O. b. T.H.A. and F.P.O. c. Principal of a college d. T.N.O.	- It takes a large amount of money for treatment. 1. Treatment service is not well. 2. The patient is left in a room. 1. Treatment cost is very high. 2. Doctors send patients for unnecessary pathological biological tests. It takes a lot of money of the patient. - Basically the private clinics are suitable for economical solvent people.

SUMMARY

The key informants were asked several questions on the issues relating to health care, health services and what need to be done. Their responses are summarized below:

The common health problems of the people in the study area are as follow:

- Diarrhea
- Chill
- Bronchitis
- Asthma
- Peptic ulcer
- Stomachache
- Pneumonia
- Sinus
- Tumor
- Indigestion
- Eczema

If there is any health problem, then the poor people go to the govt. hospitals and the rich people go to the private hospitals.

The four key informants think that the health services of the study area's govt. hospitals are not good. The reasons behind this are as:

- Want of specialist doctors in the govt. hospitals.
- Lack of modern medical equipment, even there is no arrangement for operation.
- Medicines are not available always.
- Doctors do not only attend the patients attentively but also they think when they will go to the clinics.
- Doctors have become more commercial but not co-operative.
- The doctors are butcher. The doctors who have large number of patients demand high fees from the patients.
- Budget of health sector is very small.
- Government can not provide more medicines.
- There is no scope of pathological test in govt. hospital.

But the exceptional answer of the T.H.A. and F.P.O. of the condition of health services in private hospitals are as follow:

- Private clinics are not well.
- Treatment cost is high, but the service of treatment is not well.
- Clinics seem to be jail.

The further steps should be taken to get satisfactory treatments in govt. hospitals are:

- The doctors should bear in mind "To serve the patient is to serve the humanity."
- There must be a service rule stating that the doctors of govt. hospitals will never be allowed to do part time job in private clinic.
- The private clinics should not appoint those doctors who are employed in govt. hospitals.
- The publics do not give taxes in health sector. If every person is giving a Taka in health sector, then he can expect proper treatment from the govt. hospital.
- The public should be conscious about their right to get proper treatment from govt. hospital.
- The health budget of our country should be raised.
- The service of treatment should be standard.
- The supply of medicine should be sufficient and the service of doctor should be increased.
- There should be specialist doctors, necessary and modern equipment
- Health care at the union level should be raised.
- People should be aware of prevention of disease. Regarding this matter cinema should be shown in cinema halls, towns and villages. Hygiene should be included in school syllabus.
- Emphasis should be given on family health clinic.
- The consciousness of people on health care should be raised through T.V. and Radio.

The four key informants supported the introduction of the fee system in the govt. hospitals.

In the question of doctor's behavior, the participants of the key informants said that:

- The doctors of govt. hospital do not examine patients properly. They have want of patience.
- The doctors behave according to the status of the patient.
- The behaviors of the doctors of govt. hospital are not hopeful. They do not only examine the patient in the hospital but also tell them to go to private clinic for different tests, x-rays, ultra sonograms which are almost not needed for the patient.
- Comparatively, the behaviors of the doctors of private hospital or clinics are much

better than that of govt. hospital.

The facilities of the govt. hospitals are as follow:

- The cost of treatment is very low.
- The poor patients can easily get medical facilities.
- Govt. hospitals are good for first aid. The hospitals are properly neat and clean.
- The patients get more cleanness than their homes.

But the T.N.O. said that basically there is no facility in the govt. hospital.

The difficulties of the govt. hospitals are as follow:

- The number of patients is so high that the doctors can not be hundred percent sincere.
- There is no emergency doctor.
- There are no specialist doctors in the govt. hospitals.
- The patients have to remain standing in long line.
- The patients have to face harassment for admission.
- The doctors show negligence in fixing the date of operation.
- There is no arrangement for big operation.
- There are no necessary and modern medical equipment.
- There is no sufficient medicine.
- Dirty, unhygienic atmosphere prevail in the hospital.
- Sweeper and assistants do not work properly.
- Doctors, nurses and other employees do not work attentively.
- The standard of service is very low.

The facilities of the private hospitals are:

- In private hospitals, any kind of medical services are available for all times.
- Medical services are up-to- date and up to standard.
- Medical equipment is good and modern.
- There are experts and specialist doctors available.
- Environment is neat and clean.
- Doctors, nurses and other employees are very sincere and attentive to their work.

The difficulties of the private clinics are:

- The private hospitals take a large amount of money for treatment.
- Doctors send patients for unnecessary pathological, biological tests. It takes a lot of money of the patients.
- The patient is left in a room.

The important things that have come out from the statement of the four key informants are:

- The socio-economic condition of the people of the study area is under- developed.
- Poor people go to the govt. hospital and the rich people go to the clinic.
- The medical facility of the govt. hospitals is not sufficient.
- Fee systems may be introduced in the govt. hospital.

The important things that have come out from the similar reply of the R.M.O. and T.N.O. are:

- There is no specialist in the govt. hospitals.
- The behavior of the doctor of the govt. hospital is not satisfactory.
- The medical facilities of private clinic are up to standard.

The important things of the similar reply of T.H.A. and F.P. O. and the Principal of the college are:

- The treatment cost of the private clinic is high.
- If modern medical equipment is supplied to the govt. hospitals, better health service can be provided.
- There is no sufficient medicine in the govt. hospitals.

Besides this the important things that have come out from the reply of the R.M.O. and the Principal of the college are:

- If sufficient medicine is supplied to the govt. hospital, better medical service can be provided.
- The treatment cost of the govt. hospital is low.
- In govt. hospital, doctors are not available in emergency.
- In private clinic, medical equipment is good and modern.
- It takes a lot of money to get medical treatment in the private clinic.

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