

## Regional learning sharing on COVID-19: organized by Bangladesh Health Watch

[Dhaka, Bangladesh, July 20, 2020] – The key factors to tackle COVID pandemic successfully in Kerala of India, Vietnam and Thailand are early initiatives, huge engagement of community and local government, strong political commitment and engagement of Public Health expert in policy making. The learnings were shared at a webinar titled, **Success with Covid-19: learning from Kerala (India), Thailand and Vietnam** and organized by Bangladesh Health Watch (BHW) a civil society organization today. Expert of the three countries Dr. K. R. Thankappan, Professor, Central University of Kerala, India; Dr. Chawetsan Namwat, Chief, Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP), Bangkok, Thailand; Dr. Tran Mai Oanh, Director, Health Strategy & Policy Institute (HSPI), Hanoi, Vietnam presented their experiences in this webinar where government officials, public health expert, academics, journalist and civil society members were present. Dr. Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury, Convener, Bangladesh Health Watch (BHW) moderated the session

In the presentation of Kerala Dr. Thankappan said, though Kerala was very vulnerable to COVID due to prevalence of many co-morbidity factors like Elderly proportion 12.6% Vs 8.6% in India, type 2 Diabetes 19.2% Vs 7.7% in India, hypertension 30% Vs 25% in India, highest prevalence of Asthma in South India, one of the highest incidence of cancers and population density but managed the pandemic successfully due to leadership and commitment. Now in Kerala they only have 267 cases per million where as in India it is 699 and the case fatality rate is only 0.38 in Kerala Vs 2.60 in all over the India. Some of the major factors of their success are, rigorous testing, contact tracing, and quarantine, community kitchens lead by local government, expansion of internet bandwidth and connectivity, political commitment, strong decentralized Governments and media support.

While sharing the Thailand experience Dr. Namwat said, the key to their success are, early detection and containment, strong effort on contact tracing and isolation, engagement of Public Health and Medical experts, evaluate the situation and modify the risk criteria for patient under investigation (PUI) timely, risk communication, field epidemiology training, balancing the resource use and successful engagement of private sector. Due to these they contained the spread successfully and till 19 July the total number of COVID positive case is only 3249 in Thailand.

One of the successful country in the world in terms of COVID management is Vietnam and telling the factors behind the success Dr. Mai Oanh said, Commitment and determination of the country leaders, engagement of the entire political system and multi-stakeholders, control points of entry, testing and contact tracing, four-tier classification, timely and transparent communication, focus on ethnic minority and remote areas, and focus on people with co-morbidities. And as a result till 19 July the positive case in Vietnam is only 382 with no death recorded. In reply to a question Dr. Mai said, Vietnam never hide any information regarding contract tracing, confirm case and probable risk areas.

In the concluding speech the moderator Dr. AMR Chowdhury said, though Bangladesh did a lot in COVID management but we are ready to learn from the success of other countries. The stories will inspire us to take some effective measures to manage COVID pandemic more successfully in Bangladesh.