

Date: 20 June 2020

Study Title: Re-visiting the Front Line health Workers' (FLWs)¹ attending suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients in Bangladesh: how far the situation improved in a month since the last survey?

Summary of findings

- Initially, a Rapid telephone survey was conducted during 9 – 14 April 2020 to elicit the perceptions of the FLWs who were directly involved with the management of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases in different public and private healthcare facilities in Bangladesh.
- Re-interview was conducted during 5-11 May 2020 with 46 respondents (out of 60 originally interviewed) on the relevant issues. Beside PPE and training, we asked them on different aspects of their recommendations, to check if the relevant authorities addressed these issues.
- Overall, 24% of the respondents (23.1% physicians (MBBS), 0% post-graduate physicians, 50% nurses and midwives and 12.5% paramedics) still did not receive PPE at the time of re-interview in May 2020. Compared to the earlier survey of April 2020, there has been some improvement in the supply of personal protective equipment, especially among the paramedics. However, the situation didn't improve much with respect to the quality of the PPE supplied and its proper use due to lack of training, as stated by the FLWs. Noticeably, there are still occurrences of new COVID-19 infection among all categories of the FLWs, reported almost regularly in the media.
- There has been some improvement in arranging accommodation, food, and transport for the doctors but not to the extent necessary, and not for the other FLWs.
- More than two months into the epidemic (since the identification of the first case of COVID-19 on 8 March 2020), and still there is inadequate training on COVID-19 disease itself and its management as well as the use of PPE, especially for the nurse/midwives and the paramedics.
- These factors together did little to alleviate the mental health disturbances of different categories of the FLWs, especially for the doctors, which in itself is going to be a big public health problem, now and post-COVID-19.
- The issues raised in the study such as quantity and quality of PPEs supplied, trainings, measures to easy mental health of the FLWs etc. needs urgent attention from the decision-makers in order to have a grip on the current volatile situation until it is too late.

**Bangladesh Health Watch (BHW), Dhaka
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¹ FLWs comprising doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers)