

KURIGRAM

Activism Revives Closed Hijoli Community Clinic



Women getting medicines from Hizli (Notun Anantapur) CC which once mostly closed

Kurigram district consists of 57 community clinics and most of the 57 Community Clinics were closed, poorly managed, and unhygienic like many other districts in the country.

However, the District Health Rights Forum (DHRF) has significantly improved healthcare services in Kurigram through persistent advocacy and community engagement as it organized meetings, contacted district administration and community groups and family planning office, and advocated for reopening clinics and improving services.

District Health Rights Forum went to each of the Clinics, Communicated with the management, did repeated meetings with them and discussed how the problems could be solved, it took time but the change is made through their tireless efforts.

Another notable achievement of the Forum is doing the blood grouping campaigns for pregnant women because previously it was challenging during complicated deliveries to arrange quick blood donations. Through the Forum's efforts, regular blood grouping has become a standard practice, it enables quick and effective blood donation management in critical situations thus saving lives.

With the maternity services improved, the Forum is also advocates for cleanliness drives, and awareness campaigns.

As a result, clinics now stay open, patient flow has increased, hygiene has improved, and pregnant women actively seek care. Despite limited resources, their efforts have built trust in the healthcare system and continue to transform Kurigram's health landscape for the better.

Sharing his experience, Swapan Kumar Sarkar, 72, vice president of the District Health Rights Forum, said, "When we used to visit the Hatia Community Clinic, we would see whether the clinic was open or not because or it would be closed most of the times, then arranged a meeting with the Clinic management.

"Those we could not talk personally, communicated over the phone, and convinced them that at least two doctors, a few staffs must be available at the Clinics so that people do not have to go back without getting the treatment they need and we officially write an application from HRF to the DC requesting to take necessary steps to reopen all the closed Community Clinics at Kurigram. For these relentless efforts and activities of the Forum, Clinics are now consistently open, actively serving the community and the involvement with the local population has increased."

Ripon Sarkar, CHCP of Hizligop Para Nayagram Community Clinic, shared that over the past three

years, the number of patients visiting the Clinic has risen from 600 to 700 every month, including 200 children.

"When I joined in 2011, people did not want to come to the CC at all, HRF female volunteers went door-to-door, convinced them that it is their right to seek medical help, they can go to the CCs and it is free of cost, gradually, these concerted efforts of the Forum and personal counseling made people much more trustworthy towards CCs," said Ripon Sarkar.

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Pregnant women, who were previously reluctant to take hospital services, now regularly come to the Clinic themselves, they now do everything on their own, including getting checkups four times during pregnancy, getting vaccinations on time, and taking vitamins, iron, and calcium medications.

Now, 20-25 pregnant women come here every month. There has been a notable reduction in home deliveries due to improved accessibility to healthcare services at the Clinic.

"The government has not appointed a cleaner in our Community Clinic, we have hired one on our initiative to keep the clinic clean," said the CHCP.

They try to provide the best possible service to patients, but when that is not possible, they refer them to the Upazila Health Complex or Sadar Hospital.

"We have various limitations like the table we are sitting at is broken, there are not enough chairs for meetings, there is a lack of drinking water, we have not been paid for 8 months, yet we continue our work with dedication," he said.

Patients like Majeda Yasmin, 54, who has come to get medicine for a cold and cough reflect the success of their efforts. She also comes here for the treatment of her family members and she is quite satisfied with the services provided by the clinic.

This is how the community has grown to trust the services provided by the Clinic, illustrating the magnificent change in the region's healthcare outlook.