

BARGUNA

Advocacy Restores Services at Barguna Sadar Hospital



Government ambulance service is now available in Barguna 250 Sadar Hospital

Barguna 250-bed Sadar Hospital, a major healthcare institution in coastal Bangladesh, was once plagued by chaos, mismanagement, and inadequate services. Dirty surroundings, inactive oversight, and a shortage of essential services left patients frustrated and underserved. Today, thanks to the relentless efforts of the Barguna Health Rights Forum (HRF) and the Youth Health Rights Forum, the hospital is undergoing a remarkable transformation.

The turning point began with community-led advocacy efforts initiated by HRF and its youth counterpart, formed under the guidance of Bangladesh Health Watch. These forums mobilized citizens and engaged with hospital authorities and local administration to identify issues and work towards sustainable solutions. One of the first interventions was organizing the ticketing process. Male and female lines were separated to streamline service access. The forums also pushed for better cleanliness, resulting in the installation of

dustbins and improved waste management. A security guard was posted at the main gate, and the entire hospital compound came under CCTV surveillance. Fourteen Ansar members were recruited, ensuring a safer and more secure environment for patients and staff.

Restoring Bed Capacity and Food Allocation

Although the hospital was officially upgraded from 100 to 250 beds, only 100 were functional for years. With continuous lobbying, HRF managed to secure over 200 additional beds, even exceeding the original capacity to serve the growing patient load. Alongside, food allocation was increased to match the bed count—up from 100 to 250—ensuring no admitted patient went hungry. “*Now every patient receives food,*” says HRF President Hasanur Rahman Jhantu, crediting the breakthrough to successful discussions with the District Commissioner.

Improving Diagnostics and Emergency Services

Significant progress has been made in diagnostics. Previously, patients had to rely on private diagnostic centers for basic tests. Now, the hospital boasts upgraded lab facilities offering blood, urine, and other diagnostic tests. The ECG service now runs 24/7, and lab shifts have expanded from one to two per day.

Three ambulances, including a cardiac unit, now serve the hospital, although a shortage of drivers remains a challenge.

Addressing Manpower and Mismanagement

Despite the hospital having 56 sanctioned posts for doctors, only 16 are currently staffed, creating a critical manpower crisis. The forums have urged doctors to be more present and empathetic toward patients. Efforts have also been made to revive the management committee, which had been inactive for a decade. Since then, regular meetings have resumed, allowing hospital

authorities and community members to collaboratively monitor and plan improvements.

Dr. AKM Nazmul Ahsan, the hospital's supervisor, commended the community's role:

"The intervention and advocacy of HRF have accelerated hospital activities. Every floor of the new building is now in use. Hygiene, food quality, and transparency in medicine distribution have all improved."

Voices from the Ground

Patients and local residents affirm the visible changes. "The environment used to be filthy with pan stains and garbage scattered everywhere," recalls Asifa Khanom, a 42-year-old service receiver. "Now, the hospital feels cleaner and more welcoming."