

New project on early childhood development of malnourished children launched

Dhaka, August 25 - icddr,b has launched a new project that aims to integrate nutritional care and psychosocial stimulation to improve malnourished children's growth and development in Bangladesh. A launching ceremony, to celebrate the project called 'Transition to scale of an early childhood development program in Bangladesh,' was held at icddr,b's Sasakawa auditorium, organised by icddr,b's Child Development Unit within its Centre for Child and Adolescent Health.

The researchers will investigate the feasibility of integrating nutritional care and psychosocial stimulation into community clinics, the grassroots level government health infrastructure in Bangladesh. The project is being conducted in 130 clinics in Narshingdi and Kishorgonj district. Mothers and children attending the intervention clinics will receive the psychological stimulation sessions and nutritional care fortnightly for one year. Community health care providers under the revitalization of community health care initiatives in Bangladesh (RCHCIB), health assistants under the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), and family welfare assistants under the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) will be trained to conduct the sessions. They will help mothers to understand the importance of stimulating the children at home.

Ms. Nasima Begum NDC and Secretary of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs attended this event as the chief guest and Prof. Dr. M. R. Khan as the guest of honour. The event was chaired by Dr. Makhduma Nargis, Additional Secretary and Project Director of RCHCIB, while Professor John D Clemens, the Executive Director of icddr,b gave the welcome speech. Among the special guests were Dr. Dulal Chandra Chowdhury from DGHS and Dr. Mohammed Sharif from DGFP.

In her remarks, Ms. Nasima Begum welcomed icddr,b's new study on early childhood development of malnourished children, and reiterated the importance of a concerted effort by government and non-government actors to mount the multi-sectoral response necessary for the country wide problem of child malnutrition and cognitive development.

National Professor Dr. M. R. Khan said this project will provide opportunity to learn, know and work in social and physiological development of the children.

The integration of 'psychosocial stimulation' with 'nutritional care' could positively contribute to the health outcomes of millions of children in low- and middle-income countries, said Professor Clemens.

Dr Jena Hamadani, the principal investigator of the project, believes that the project findings can improve our understanding of the effect of psychosocial stimulation on the language, mental and psychomotor development, and behaviour of malnourished children, and can help future efforts to scale up the interventions.

The study is funded by Grand Challenges Canada. It is being conducted in collaboration with DGHS, DGFP, RCHCIB and Bangladesh Shishu Academy.

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Notes to the Editor

About icddr,b

icddr,b (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh) is a not-for-profit international health research institution located in Dhaka. Dedicated to saving lives through research and treatment, icddr,b addresses some of the most critical health concerns facing the world today, ranging from improving neonatal survival to HIV/AIDS. In collaboration with academic and research institutions throughout the world, icddr,b conducts research, training and extension activities, as well as programme-based activities, to develop and share knowledge for global lifesaving solutions.