Youth's Perspectives on Reforms:
Health and Technology

Presented by

Preetilata Khondaker Huq

Programme Associate (Research)

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

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Context

Bangladesh scored the lowest in the 2022 Health Inclusivity Index by Economist Impact.

- Bangladesh ranked **40th out of 40 countries** in all three domains, scoring 22.6 in inclusive health, 36.3 in health in society, and 22.3 in people and community empowerment.
- In comparison, the average inclusive health score was 63.4.

According to the Global Health Security Index, in 2021, Bangladesh **ranked 95 out of 195** countries

- 4th out of 9 countries in Southern Asia
- 17th out of 45 lower-middle-income countries
- The Global Health Security Index (GHS Index) is the first comprehensive benchmark of health security and related capabilities.
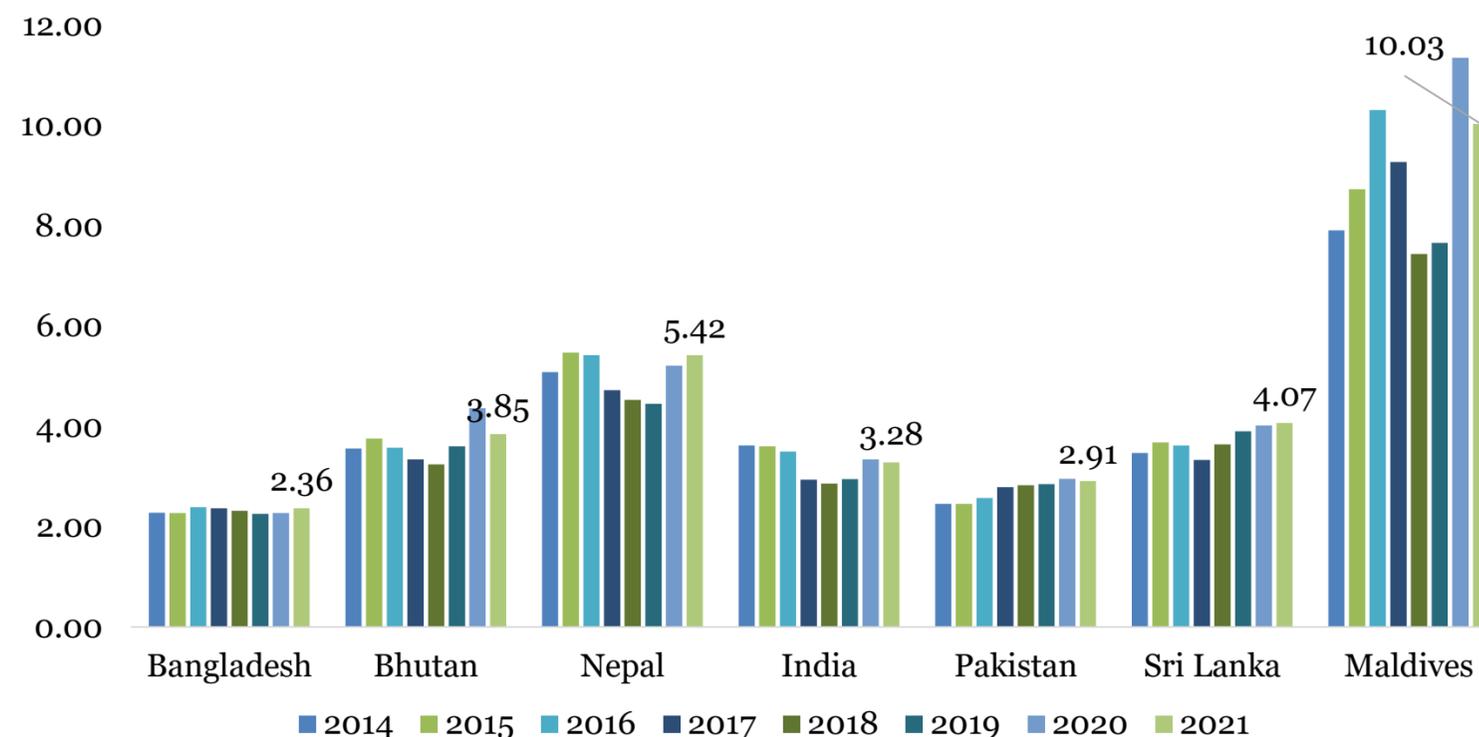
Digital healthcare has the potential to redefine healthcare accessibility, by using an integrated health ecosystem.

In this context, empowering youth to leverage technology is crucial, as they hold the potential to transform Bangladesh's healthcare system.

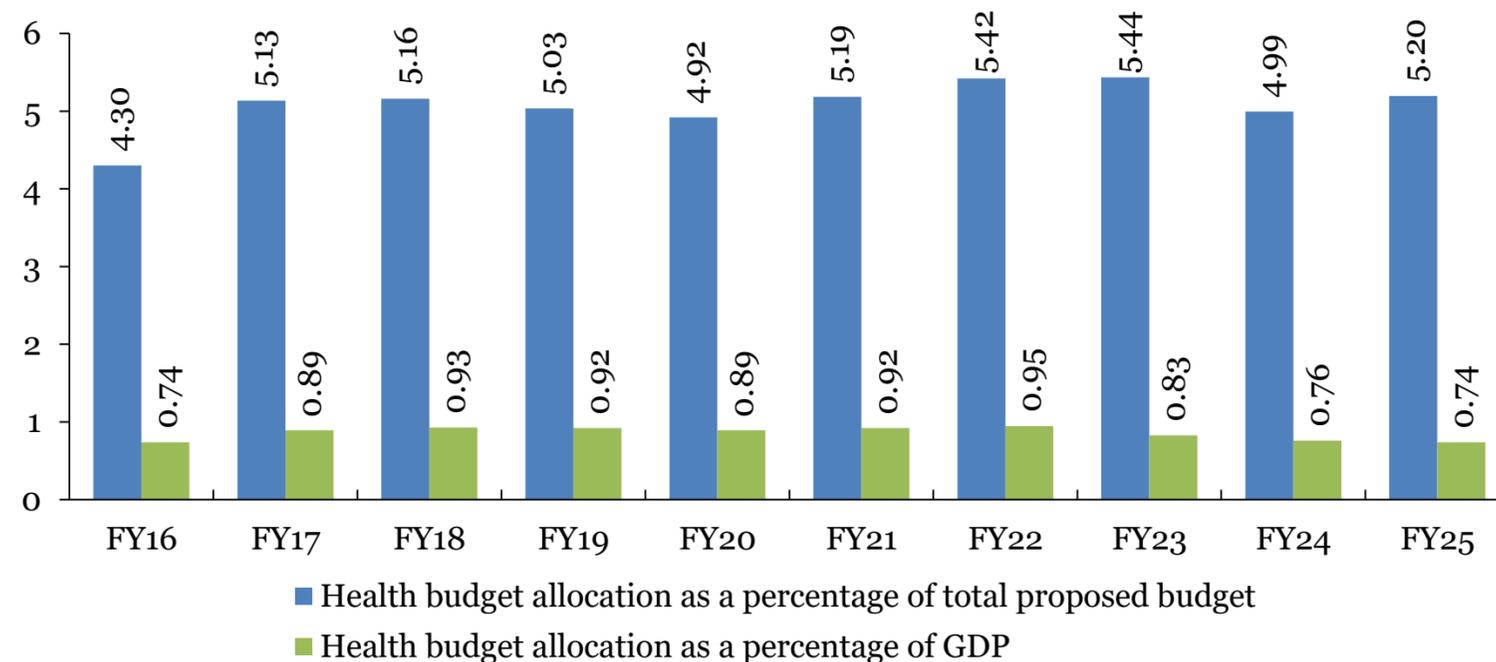# Scenario of Bangladesh's Healthcare Expenditure

- Current health expenditure as a percentage of GDP was **2.36%** in 2021, much lower than that of our regional neighbours.

- Out of this, **public expenditure on health from domestic sources** was **only 0.40%** of GDP.

- The proposed budget allocation for health in the FY25 budget is **5.20% of the total budget** and **0.74% of the GDP** (MoF, 2024).

- Out-of-pocket healthcare costs in Bangladesh comprise **73% of total costs,** whereas it is 19% in Bhutan, 50% in India, 57% in Pakistan, 43% in Sri Lanka and 14% in Maldives, as of 2021.

- Out-of-pocket healthcare costs have **worsened poverty**, **pushing 3.74% of the population below the USD 2.15/day poverty line** in 2016, up from 3.11% in 2010.

Current health expenditure (% of GDP)

Legend: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021

Source: World Bank Group (2024).

Allocation for Health as a Share of Total Budget and GDP (%)

Health budget allocation as a percentage of total proposed budget
Health budget allocation as a percentage of GDP

Source: Calculations based on budget documents from the Ministry of Finance

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Access to Technology

- Bangladesh scored 61.1 out of 100 in the International Telecom Union's ICT Development Index (IDI) 2023.
  - This is below the global average. Sri Lanka scored 69.9, Bhutan 76.5, Vietnam 80.6, Maldives 79 and Indonesia 80.1.

According to the ICT Development Index 2023, in 2021:

- 38.1 % of households had internet access at home
- There were 54.1 mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants
- 98 % of the population was covered by at least a 3G mobile network
- 61.8 % of individuals owned a mobile phone
- People in Bangladesh spend (on average) **2 %** of their income on mobile data, voice and broadband internet.

Gender Gap in Access to Technology

According to the Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025

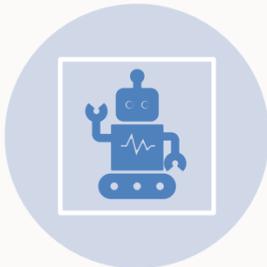85 % of males and 63% of females owned a mobile phone

40 % of males and 25% of females owned a smart phone

Mobile internet adoption was 42 % for males and 26% for females

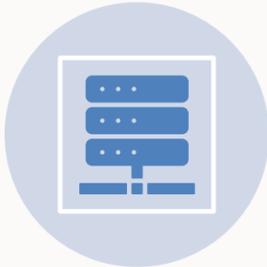# Challenges in Integrating Technology in the Healthcare Sector

Limited digital infrastructure in rural areas

Limited capacity/skills of healthcare workers of being able to use digital tools
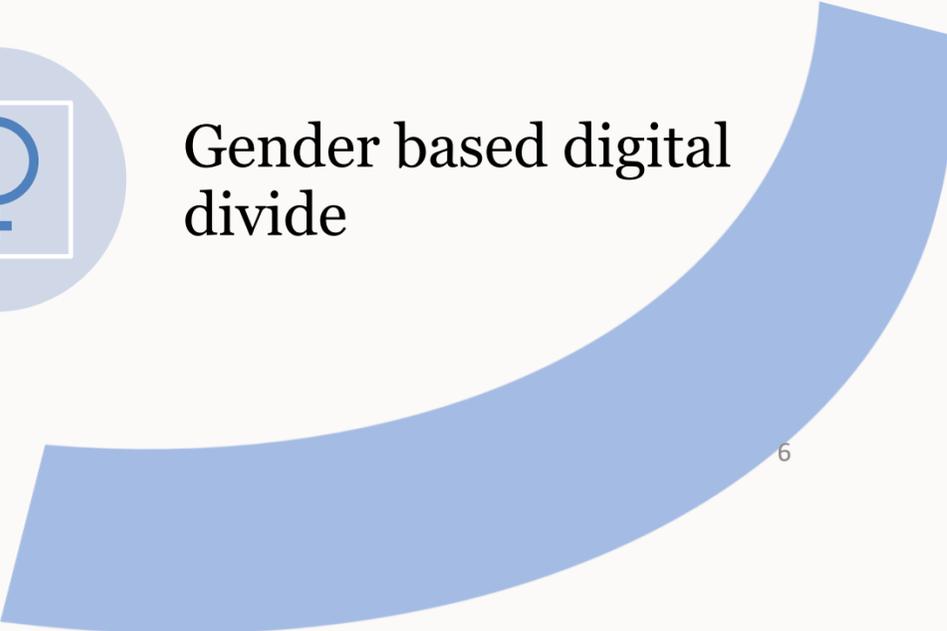
Lack of governance, high bureaucracy

Multiple digital platforms exist (eMIS, HRIS, DHIS2), but lack interoperability.

Low digital literacy

Gender based digital divide

Recommended Reforms

Health and Financing	Increase public health expenditure to at least 2% of GDP and increase budget allocation for health to 15 % (Health Reform Commission)
	Making primary healthcare free for all (Health Reform Commission)
	Expanding social health insurance (eg under the Shamajik Shakhtho Kormoshuchi programme), and introducing Universal Health Coverage (Health Reform Commission, Taskforce on Re-strategising the Economy)
	Introducing subsided health insurance for low income and marginalised women (Women's Affairs Reform Commission)
	Using digital tools to track health expenditure (Taskforce on Re-strategising the Economy)
Governance and Accountability in the Health Sector	Create an autonomous National Health Commission to oversee planning and evaluation (Health Reform Commission)
	Establish community-led monitoring systems for health services (Health Reform Commission)
	Use digital grievance redress systems to address complaints (Health Reform Commission)

Recommended Reforms

Digital Health Infrastructure	Expand digital infrastructure (internet, devices) in rural areas (Health Reform Commission, Taskforce on Re-strategising the Economy)
	Provide IT equipment and training to district Health Managers (Civil Surgeons) (Taskforce on Re-strategising the Economy)
	Develop a nationwide digital health platform for records, diagnostics referrals (Taskforce on Re-strategising the Economy)
Digital Tools	Launch smart health card for every citizen ((Health Reform Commission)
	Scale up telemedicine and mobile health tools for outreach (Health Reform Commission)
	Roll out the স্বাস্থ্য-সঙ্গী app for rural health advice, immunisation alerts, teleconsultation (Health Reform Commission)

Questions for Further Discussion

What are the biggest challenges in using technology in healthcare services in Bangladesh, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas?

How can technology ensure equitable access to healthcare and decrease the high out-of-pocket expenditure?

How can technology be used to increase transparency and accountability in the healthcare system, for instance, facility and health worker registries?

How can the youth be more integrated in process of infusing technology into healthcare?

What role can youth-led start-ups and social enterprises play in transforming the healthcare landscape through technology?

What regulatory mechanisms are needed to ensure the safety, accuracy, and effectiveness of digital health platforms?

Thank You

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