HealthBridge

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Mobilizing youth for community outreach

In neighbourhoods where reproductive health services are still associated with shame or social disapproval, where adolescents lack knowledge of their reproductive rights and bodily autonomy, where myths and misconceptions about contraception, menstruation, and abortion remain widespread, community awareness and education are key to improving women's health and rights.

HealthBridge partners in Dhaka, Bangladesh recruited and trained more than 1,500 youth volunteers, 16-24 years old, to conduct community outreach, helping normalize conversations around sensitive reproductive health topics. Youth volunteers delivered messages on family planning, MR-PAC (early abortion and post-abortion care), menstrual hygiene, and gender-based violence through door-to-door visits, community meetings, and school events.

Every general practitioner (GP) who was trained by HealthBridge partners was supported by 10 youth volunteers, organized into Community Action Groups (CAGs). Youth leadership has reduced social barriers and strengthened linkages between communities and GPs, resulting in higher service uptake.

Outreach activities

- Door-to-door visits
- Community sessions
- World Population Day rally
- Special day events
- School campaigns
- Interactive game on SRHR
- Health camps
- Sticker campaign
- Interactive drama
- Facebook page
- Distribution of leaflets
- Photovoice project

By the numbers

1510 youth volunteers
100 community action groups
1046 community sessions
15 drama shows
45 school campaigns
152 health camps
300 door-to-door visits
40,000 Facebook followers
1.75 million digital reach

A youth volunteer at entrance to a health camp

A future leader stands up for women's rights

When a group of young people were being trained as community volunteers, 15-year-old Pratigya* stood out. Pratigya was selected and oriented by a HealthBridge partner in Bangladesh as one of a thousand youth volunteers.

Young people learned about puberty, menstrual hygiene, family planning, early abortion and gender-based violence.

The training clarified the idea of rights for Pratigya.

The concept of gender equality is not clear within the community, especially in the lower socio-economic settings. Women generally accept that certain decisions — choosing a partner, selecting a family planning method — will be made by their parents and partners.

Pratigya says, "We had a session where we practised the cross-the-line method. With each statement, the team members took their positions and shared their opinions. But when the statement was about a woman's right to choose her family planning method, I found myself alone, standing against the whole team.

Pratigya was able to convince four other volunteers to cross the line and change their side during the session. Because of her belief and persuasiveness, she was identified as a rights ambassador and future leader. Pratigya says she has no regrets.

**not her real name*

Bangladesh Urban Youth Conference

In 2025, HealthBridge partners convened the Bangladesh Urban Youth Conference, bringing together 600 youth volunteers and distinguished guests from government, academia, civil society, and the media.

Consultations with community members informed the development of policy recommendations, which culminated in the Dhaka Declaration 2025 – a call for collective action to advance the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of all urban youth.

The declaration emphasizes investing in youth leadership, strengthening community service linkages through meaningful youth engagement, and ensuring that every individual, regardless of gender or socio-economic background, has access to accurate information, quality SRHR services, and the ability to exercise their reproductive rights.

HealthBridge — supported by the Government of Canada and working through partners in Bangladesh — implemented the 5-year "Improving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Dhaka" project to address the needs of underserved women and adolescent girls.

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