

Communication in Creating Health Awareness of Rural People: Insight of Northern Bangladesh



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Executive Summary

Health awareness is mandatory to live a healthy life. To develop health awareness communication is necessary. Bangladesh has achieved a remarkable development in health sector even in the rural areas. The study was aimed to identify effective communication channel in creating health awareness of rural people as well as to know the health seeking behavior of rural people and lastly to assess the impact of national health program and services exists in rural villages. A total of 150 respondents were selected randomly from 4 villages of 4 different upazilas under Rajshahi and Shirajganj districts of Bangladesh. Data was collected by face to face interview using prefixed questionnaire. Among respondents all are agreed about the importance of health information regarding different health issues like sanitation, pre and post maternal healthcare, immunization through vaccination and importance of family planning. Both government and non-government organizations are working in the study areas by providing health awareness messages however, government is doing a good job by providing healthcare services rather than NGO's. Respondents reported various sources of information channels regarding health. Radio, television, doctor, pharmacy, Thana Health Complex (THC), GO and NGO health worker, folk events, friends or relatives, opinion leaders, posters and leaflets are the major sources of information to them. The result indicates that, most of the respondent opined about effectiveness of interpersonal communication in creating health awareness though they are also aware by the mass media and other communication channels. Communication channels were categorized in formal and informal information sources. In terms of formal information sources, doctors (62%) are the most reliable formal source of health information mentioned by the respondents whereas the most popular informal communication source in the study areas are village doctor (51%). It is noticeable that, 63 percent of the respondents aware about Thana Health Complex as government public health service provider. In terms of respondent's health service taking behavior it is found that, hospital is the trusted place where majority of the respondents goes to get information and services for vaccination (94%), family planning (50%) and pre and post maternal health service (58%) respectively. However, 89% of the respondents noticeably get sanitation information from nearby pharmacy. Besides, clinic is the most often visited place for the respondents (49%) for other diseases like skin problem, seasonal health problems such as fever critical injuries and so on. In case of respondent's communication with sources regarding different

health issues, it is found that most of the respondents, 77.33 percent communicate with formal sources of health service and information for vaccination issues. At the same time, the highest number of respondents 48.7 percent frequently communicates with the informal sources for family planning information. Moreover, numbers of FGD were also conducted to collect the information of various qualitative aspects of health awareness in rural areas of the country. FGD's revealed that, Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI) is a very successful program in the study areas. Young generation mostly use internet and social media to get health related information and they are aware of health care campaigns. Video documentaries are organized rarely in the villages regarding health promotions.

Keywords: Health, Health awareness, Communication, Information.