

The Power of Mentorship & Supportive Supervision in Bangladesh



Shukhi Jibon

PATHFINDER

ABOUT SHUKHI JIBON

Pathfinder International implements the USAID Accelerating Universal Access to Family Planning Project, also known as Shukhi Jibon. From 2018–2023 across Dhaka, Chattogram, Mymensingh, and Sylhet divisions of Bangladesh, Shukhi Jibon works to improve the health and wellbeing of Bangladeshi people by increasing access to family planning services and strengthening the capacity of health providers to improve the quality of their services.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Pathfinder worked closely with national and international technical experts, following a thorough, systematic process for developing and implementing this Mentorship and Supportive Supervision (M&SS) approach and related materials. A high-level technical review committee, comprising members from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOH&FW), Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), and Dhaka University—chaired by the Joint Secretary (Planning) of MOH&FW—provided critical review and supported the finalization of content in M&SS manuals.

Pathfinder expresses our gratitude to USAID Bangladesh for their generous support. We would also like to acknowledge the dedication and guidance of the technical review committee and M&SS Working Group, with representation from NIPORT, DGFP, DGHS, Dhaka University, Ipas, and Pathfinder.

We are grateful to the mentors and mentees of DGFP, DGHS, Directorate General of Nursing and Midwifery (DGNM), and NIPORT, whose time, dedication, and valuable practical feedback make this work possible.



Strengthening the Capacity of Bangladesh's Family Planning Workforce

The USAID Accelerating Universal Access to Family Planning Project, popularly known as Shukhi Jibon, supports the government of Bangladesh to deploy skilled, responsive, and respectful providers who deliver high quality family planning and sexual and reproductive health services.

This publication highlights a selection of key activities—and dedicated individuals—at the heart of Shukhi Jibon's Mentorship and Supportive Supervision (M&SS) efforts. With continued investment from valued partners, this innovative approach can contribute to dramatic improvements in the capacity of public sector health providers and the quality of family planning services across Bangladesh.

“Now we can offer far better quality of services.”



PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh

Dr. Pratima Rani Tripura

Assistant Surgeon, 10 Bed Mother and Child Welfare Center, Purbo Bakalia, Chattogram

MENTOR

Closing a Critical Gap

The Government of Bangladesh has demonstrated its strong commitment to strengthening the capacity of health service providers. Bangladesh's 4th Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Program's Operational Plans emphasize the importance of strengthening the country's supervision system. The 2015 Bangladesh Health Workforce Strategy prioritizes strengthening supportive supervision to diversify and enhance skills and boost retention among members of the health workforce.



Photo: Ridwanul Mosrur/Pathfinder Bangladesh

Despite this progress, critical gaps remain.

On average, only 76.5% of union-level public facilities offer family planning services every day.¹

44.5% of clinics have staff who were never trained on family planning.²

There are no formal requirements for continuing medical education for family planning providers.

1 Bangladesh Health Facility Survey (BHFS), 2017.

2 BHFS, 2017.

Training Alone Is Not Enough

To ensure family planning service providers and health facility managers become fully competent and comfortable providing client-centered care in their service delivery environments, they need on-the-job support, including post-training reinforcement and follow-up.

Shukhi Jibon's approach to M&SS offers a new solution for growing and strengthening Bangladesh's qualified family planning workforce to improve the quality of family planning services.



PHOTO: Ridwanul Mosrur/Pathfinder Bangladesh

Making History

Shukhi Jibon is the first project in Bangladesh to support public-sector family planning service providers by integrating mentorship into the government's existing service delivery supervision system.



PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh

Dr. Hosne Ara Begum

Medical Officer–Clinical Contraception,
Mymensingh

MENTOR

“As a result of this [M&SS] program, the service providers have become more aware of their responsibilities. In every way, **the work is much more organized.** From filing clients’ details to regular follow-up, check-ups, and treatment consistency, everything is given more importance now.”

Strengthening
providers' skills.

Enhancing
facility readiness.

Improving the
quality of services.

“The M&SS training program has served as a power booster for our overall development.”



PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh

Dr. Mohammad Rakib Ullah

District Consultant (FPCS-QIT*), Cox's Bazar

MENTOR

* Family Planning Clinical Supervision and Quality Improvement Team



PHOTOS: Pathfinder Bangladesh



“This is a very effective way to develop the skill of a service provider.”

“I am now able to receive quick feedback and have increased my knowledge and skills.”

Dr. Abdur Rouf

Assistant Director–Clinical Contraception,
Mymensingh

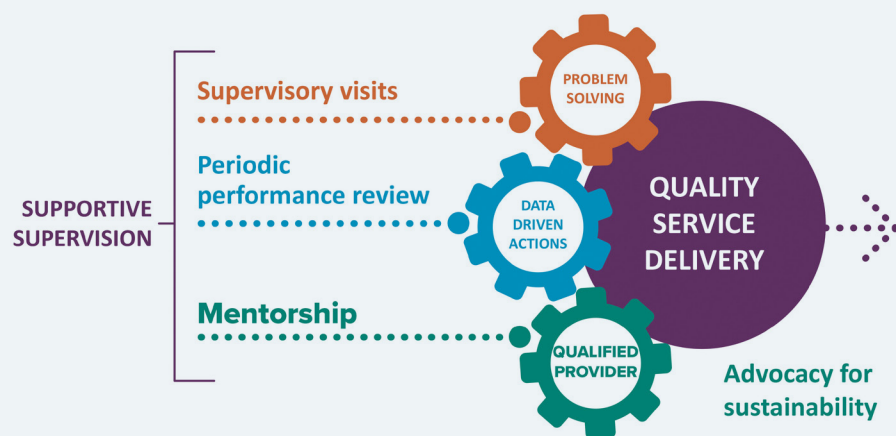
MENTOR

Shamim Ara Murad

Family Welfare Visitor (FWV), 10 Bed Mother and
Child Welfare Center, Purbo Bakalia, Chattogram

MENTEE

Two Complementary Approaches, Stronger Together.



Theory of Change: Integrated M&SS Approach

Incorporating mentorship into supportive supervision, along with routine supervisory visits and periodic performance reviews of facilities and providers, can deliver key outcomes that drive improvements in the quality of family planning services. Advocacy can help sustain these improvements.

Mentorship provides insight into the root causes of performance gaps, builds provider skills and confidence, improves interpersonal and supervisor-supervisee relationships, and facilitates communication across providers and supervisors.

Supportive supervision, meanwhile, fosters an enabling work environment by ensuring effective resource mobilization, facility readiness, and a systematic ability to resolve issues efficiently.



PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh

To ensure sustainability, Shukhi Jibon engaged members of the public-sector workforce as mentors. In consultation with local stakeholders, the project selected national and divisional managers and service providers of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP), and the Directorate General of Nursing and Midwifery (DGNM) to be trained as master mentors. These master mentors subsequently trained mentors at the district and upazila levels. Full-time Shukhi Jibon regional M&SS staff supported the existing district Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) supervisors and newly trained mentors during and after training.

Mentors were paired with up to five mentees. Before beginning the mentorship sessions, mentors conducted SWOT analyses of mentees (a method for evaluating **s**trengths, **w**eaknesses, **o**pportunities, and **t**hreats), creating individual mentee profiles. Next, mentors met mentees for periodic onsite mentorship

sessions and provided coaching and on-the-job training. The topics and timing of these sessions were determined based on each mentee's interest and identified areas for growth.

Shukhi Jibon also worked to ensure regular supportive supervision, including quarterly supervisory visits, which has increased compliance with protocols and the availability of supplies. Supervisors took a "SMART" approach (identifying and working toward goals that are **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**elevant, and **t**ime-bound) to problem solving and action planning. This improved coordination within facilities and among the DGFP and DGHS, which has led to increased facility readiness and more efficient use of resources. M&SS also helped district and upazila managers analyze the quality of family planning services by examining contraceptive discontinuation rates, side effects, complications management, and removal trends.

“Previously, there was no use of a specific checklist at work. In the absence of regular supervision, it was not possible to provide proper guidelines. ...As a result, they didn’t have clarity and focus. But [after the training], when the tasks were explained with specificity, **everything could be managed much better.**”



PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh

Dr. Hosne Ara Begum

Medical Officer–Clinical Contraception,
Mymensingh

MENTOR



PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh

Shamim Ara Murad

FWV, 10 Bed Mother and Child Welfare
Center, Purbo Bakalia, Chattogram

MENTEE

“Following the checklist, I, along with two other mentees have been receiving round-the-clock work guidance from our mentor. I’ve been able to immediately correct my mistakes.”

Introducing New Integrated Tools and Resources

Shukhi Jibon developed integrated M&SS training and curricula to focus on common skills required for both mentorship and supportive supervision:

PHOTO: Ridwanul Mosrur/Pathfinder



Observing service delivery using skills checklists

Monitoring service delivery data

Recommending performance and service delivery improvements

Demonstrating correct clinical technique

Reviewing and providing input on adverse events

Learning, encouraging, and motivating

Providing constructive and supportive feedback and enhancing joint problem-solving using effective communication

SMART (*s*pecific, *m*easurable, *a*chievable, *r*elevant and *t*ime-bound) action planning

Supervising peer monitoring/swap visits with other providers and facilities



At a health facility where providers and critical supplies were missing, M&SS inspired an urgent response.

More than 17,000 people of the Nasirabad union in Bhanga upazila, Fairdpur district, rely on a single health center. Despite this incredible need, in 2019, there were no service providers posted in this facility when Shukhi Jibon launched new M&SS activities.

In response, Shukhi Jibon trained Dr. Sanowar Hossain Khan—Assistant Director and Clinical Contraception and Regional Consultant, Family Planning Clinical Supervision and Quality Improvement Team (FPCS-QIT) of Faridpur—on M&SS. The project also oriented district and upazila managers and service providers of Bhanga. In addition, two providers—Family Welfare Visitor Ms. Ratna Ahmed and a Sub-Assistant Community Medical Officer Md. Abdul Kuddus—were posted at the health center.

Dr. Sanowar became the first external supervisor to visit the facility. He immediately identified challenges the two providers were facing. Various supplies, equipment, manuals, and registers were unavailable. Within a week of Dr. Sanowar's supervisory visit, IUDs, IUD instruments, consent forms, a patient examination bed, and general and adolescent service registers were procured, and an urgent request was made to the Upazila Family Planning Officer of Bhanga to supply an IUD sterilizer and a scale.

Ms. Ahmed attributes the rapid change in facility readiness and quality of services to frequent contacts and visits by the Medical Officer for Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning (MO-MCHFP) and the Assistant Director for Clinical Contraception, both of whom were supported and trained on M&SS by Shukhi Jibon.

“I am really grateful to Shukhi Jibon because for the first time I have got a wonderful blood pressure machine from our office. Now I will be able to provide quality care.”

Ratna Ahmed

FWV, Nasirabad Union Health and Family Welfare Center (UH&FWC), Faridpur

MENTEE

“From the M&SS training, **I have gained the knowledge of leadership.** I take feedback from my mentees on what problems they are facing while working, whether they can provide proper services now, whether the work has progressed as a result of training.”



PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh

Dr. Shariful Islam

Medical Officer–Maternal and Child Health
and Family Planning, Alfadanga, Faridpur

MENTEE GRADUATED TO MENTOR

Transforming Family Planning Counseling

By bolstering support for providers and strengthening accountability mechanisms, M&SS creates opportunities to identify and address provider bias to ensure respectful care, including the provision of appropriate contraceptive information for all family planning clients, including newlyweds, first-time parents, adolescents, and youth.



Photo: Pathfinder Bangladesh

“I have been serving the clients who come to this health complex for a long time. While working as a mentee ... I learned we shouldn't force decisions on our clients, but rather be cordial with them to provide the required services.”

Razzabernesa

FWV, Kandigaon UH&FWC, Sadar, Sylhet

MENTEE GRADUATED TO MENTOR

“Through this training, I have learned how to develop communication with the client. Earlier, I did not focus so much on counseling and communication, but as a result of this training and through the guidance of my mentor, I take these matters seriously ... **allowing clients to speak openly** and creating an environment in which they are interested in speaking on their own.”

Shafiqul Islam

Sub-Assistant Community Medical Officer,
Aqua UH&FWC, Sadar, Mymensingh

MENTEE

“Mentees used to know about client counseling, but didn’t have a clear idea. **Now they have become experts in this field, and the number of service recipients is increasing** day by day. As a result, mentees are quite happy, much more active and optimistic than before. I think the work will be more fruitful through repeated supervision.”

Dr. Shariful Islam

Medical Officer–Maternal and Child Health
and Family Planning, Alfadanga, Faridpur

MENTEE GRADUATED TO MENTOR

Increasing Client Satisfaction

Ultimately, M&SS leads to more women, men, and young people getting the family planning services they desire.

PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh



“Clients now rush to these mentees for advice... All of us are working together to ensure that each client is satisfied and quality services are delivered. As a result, it is seen that our clients themselves are bringing in other people with them or referring them to us.”

Dr. Pratima Rani Tripura

Assistant Surgeon, 10 Bed Mother and Child Welfare Center, Purbo Bakalia, Chattogram

MENTOR

“Now we get better treatment in this health facility ... and that’s why we come here.”

PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh



“[My wife and I] were a little hesitant before coming to [the health center]. We were not clear about how long we should wait between having our first and second child—or the risks involved with our first pregnancy. Besides, I didn’t have any idea about what I needed to do as a husband. **We can freely talk to apa [Family Welfare Visitor] about anything.** Even when I don’t understand some basic things, she doesn’t get bothered at all and takes the time to explain them in detail. We are lucky to have a health worker like her in our area.”



PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh

Arif and Fatema*

FAMILY PLANNING CLIENTS

* Names have been changed

Driving a Surge in Motivation

M&SS creates mutually beneficial relationships. In addition to improving mentee knowledge, attitudes, and skills, Shukhi Jibon's approach has helped both mentors and mentees improve their interpersonal communication skills, accountability, and motivation.

PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh



“Before, there was no satisfaction among [my staff]. Appreciation and acknowledgment of work are very necessary, which was a bit lacking before. We are now well aware ... and can motivate my staff more through proper recognition of their work.”

Dr. Mohammad Rakib Ullah

District FPCS-QIT Consultant, Cox's Bazar

MENTOR

“At its core,
**motivation is a
kind of teaching.**
And any teaching
takes time, but it’s
not impossible. I
listen carefully to
the problems of
my [mentees] and
try to solve them
through discussion
with them.”



PHOTO: Pathfinder Bangladesh

Dr. AKM Hedayetul Islam

Medical Officer–Maternal and Child Health and
Family Planning, Burichang Upazila, Cumilla

MENTEE GRADUATED TO MENTOR

Promoting Growth and Leadership

M&SS is a transformative approach. Many mentees, having directly benefited from the program, choose to continue to grow their skills and knowledge—passing along what they have learned—by becoming mentors.

“Through this program, skills of the mentees have increased notably and many of the **mentees are now qualified to be mentors.**”



Dr. Md. Abdur Rouf

Assistant Director-Clinical Contraception,
Mymensingh

MENTEE GRADUATED TO MENTOR



“I was a mentee at [the Directorate General of Family Planning]. ...I worked hard and eventually became a mentor.”

Dr. AKM Hedayetul Islam

Medical Officer–Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning, Burichang Upazila, Cumilla

MENTEE GRADUATED TO MENTOR

“This supportive environment and work process helped me to become a mentor from a mentee.”

Razzabernesha

FWV, Kandigaon UH&FWC, Sadar, Sylhet

MENTEE GRADUATED TO MENTOR

Pointing the Way Forward

As Bangladesh takes action to address a significant shortage of skilled family planning service providers, Shukhi Jibon's M&SS approach offers solutions—to close gaps, build providers' skills, create an enabling work environment, and improve the quality of care. Thanks to the strong commitment of our partners, including dedicated public sector health service providers, facility managers, and supervisors who promote the seamless integration of these activities into their existing workloads and processes, M&SS has the potential to make a significant impact.

For anyone who wants to accelerate Bangladesh's progress in achieving its ambitious family planning goals and ensure more people across the country are able to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, M&SS is a worthy investment.



“I strongly believe that, to increase the skills and enthusiasm of both mentees and mentors ... **the training programme and its related activities should continue in the future.**”

Dr. AKM Hedayetul Islam

Medical Officer–Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning, Burichang Upazila, Cumilla

MENTEE GRADUATED TO MENTOR

“As the staff have become more efficient, **the scope of work has also increased.** In addition to family planning, we are now working on issues such as reproductive health, nutrition, prevention of child marriage, and reduction of maternal and child mortality.”

Dr. Md. Abdur Rouf

Assistant Director-Clinical Contraception, Mymensingh

MENTOR

“These things motivate us to work harder.
We have been able to ensure quality
service through the M&SS training.”

Dr. Pratima Rani Tripura

Assistant Surgeon, 10 Bed Mother and Child Welfare Center, Purbo Bakalia, Chattogram

MENTOR

This document is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the sole responsibility of Pathfinder International and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Pathfinder International - USA
9 Galen St, Watertown, MA 02472, USA | +1 617 924 7200

Pathfinder International - Bangladesh
Shezad Palace, 5th floor, 32 Gulshan Avenue North C/A
Dhaka - 1212, Bangladesh | +880-1770294834

pathfinder.org | [@pathfinderInt](https://twitter.com/pathfinderInt):   



Shukhi Jibon

PATHFINDER 