CASE STUDY

APPLYING A SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO INSTITUTIONALISE C4D CURRICULUM AND RESEARCH: A CASE STUDY FROM BANGLADESH

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Abstract

With the goal of preparing development professionals with C4D skills for a growing number of social change initiatives in Bangladesh, UNICEF launched a university capacity building programme in 2017 in partnership with University Grants Commission of Bangladesh and with technical support from Ohio University, USA. Because capacity building in higher education depends on the roles of stakeholders at multiple levels – individual faculty, department, university and the development sector – this case study explores how the UNICEF programme utilised or reflected the Social Ecological Model (SEM). Additionally, utilising mixed methods, this study seeks to understand the outcomes in terms of curriculum, research and partnership/collaboration between universities and development programmes. The application of the SEM was reflected in the creation of an enabling environment for faculty teaching and creating curriculum on C4D, the launching of new C4D curricula in 10 universities, faculty interest in C4D-related research, and the development of a research fellowship programme.

Keywords: *C4D, social and behaviour change, Bangladesh, universities, UGC, social ecological model, curriculum, research, capacity building, higher education.*

Introduction

In 2017, UNICEF Bangladesh commissioned Ohio University (USA) to undertake a capacity assessment of Communication for Development (C4D) education in Bangladesh universities. Although C4D plays a key role in "sustained and wider social change" in Bangladesh, there is a shortage of formally trained professionals with the skills to work in C4D for national and local government agencies, international development organisations, non-governmental and civil society organisations. UNICEF's goal was to partner with national and regional universities to introduce or expand their C4D curriculum, and to improve faculty skills in conducting applied social research (UNICEF Bangladesh,

2016). Whereas the assessment found that few universities offered distinct C4D[i] classes and modules, it identified several C4D-related classes and academic programmes (Ohio University, 2017). The assessment identified potential areas of intervention and partnership in curriculum and research and differences in academic culture between public and private universities (Ohio University, 2017). Partnering with the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC), UNICEF undertook initiatives from 2017 to 2020 with the goal of institutionalizing C4D curriculum and research. Because the success of capacity building in higher education depends on the interaction of related, multi-layered factors and stakeholders, this case study explores how the initiative utilised or reflected the Social Ecological Model (SEM), a fundamental approach to designing C4D strategies. Additionally, this study examines outcomes in curriculum adoption, research and collaboration among universities, UNICEF, and the development sector on C4D.

Higher Education Landscape in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's higher education sector is growing fast. The country has 49 public universities (up from 37 in 2017), 103 private universities (up from 93 in 2017) and two international universities with about 4 million students (UGC, 2018). Universities vary considerably in size, human resources, facilities, and capacity. Well established public institutions such as the University of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar University, the University of Rajshahi, and the University of Chittagong offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in multiple disciplines. Enrolments at newer public, private, and regional science and technology universities with a more focused range of disciplines are growing rapidly (UGC, 2018).

      The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC), the regulatory institution for higher education, plays a key role in supporting universities to adopt new curricula and areas of research, such as C4D. UGC's major functions include: enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, introducing and encouraging innovative research and development, and improving and monitoring governance issues at both public and private universities (UGC, 2021).

Significance of C4D Curriculum and Research Strengthening

For several decades, a wide range of C4D strategies have contributed to Bangladesh's progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in health, gender parity, education, and local or rural economic development. In 2014, Third Primary Education Development Programme used a C4D approach for attaining Bangladesh Government's (GoB) goals with primary school enrollment and retention and ensuring quality education for all children (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014). Moreover, the use of C4D in the government's family planning and immunisation programmes resulted in positive attitudinal change in favour of small families (Gayen & Raeside, 2006) and higher immunisation rates (Waisbord & Larson, 2005). In fact, since the 1970s, the government's family planning initiative has adopted a comprehensive communication strategy including C4D to contain population growth (Gayen & Raeside, 2006).

      In the health sector, social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) has been adopted as a national strategy by the Health and Family Welfare Ministry to promote healthy behaviours and social norms at the community and individual levels (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2016). The National Plan of Action (NPA) to End Child Marriage, led by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) includes significant attention to the utilisation of C4D strategies to change norms around the practice of child marriage. A recent example of a major C4D intervention is the UNICEF-UNFPA-GoB C4D programme to end child marriage, including a 26-episode adolescent-focused TV drama series – *Icchedana* – that combined two C4D approaches, social norms change and entertainment-education (Sengupta, Sood, Kapil, and Sultana, 2020). Furthermore, GoB has invested in information and communication technology infrastructure in rural and remote areas to improve public access to information and to improve social inclusion (UNDP, 2009).

      In 2019, the Bangladesh Development Communication Forum (BDCF), comprised of development professionals working for local and international development organisations, was created, indicating a growing attention to this area of work and expertise (Sun Online Desk, 2019). Because C4D approaches are used in various development programmes, the number of professionals working in

the field has grown and there is demand for more college graduates with accredited C4D degrees or training.

State of C4D Education in Bangladesh before 2017

Prior to the 2017 initiative, no publicly accessible and recent study had been conducted to assess C4D education in Bangladesh. To assess the state of C4D education, the Ohio University team conducted desk research and a survey of university faculty and administrators, and made visits to nine public universities, two private universities and three medical colleges in February and April 2017. According to the capacity assessment, 20 public universities (just over half of the total number, including four medical universities/colleges), offered a standalone class on C4D, such as health and population communication or development communication, or a C4D-related class in the social and applied sciences. Most of the standalone classes were offered in communication and journalism programmes (Ohio University, 2017). "C4D-related classes" are those that do not solely cover C4D approaches, theories and research but focus on issues such as poverty, population, public health, gender, education, environment, disaster management, human rights, social policies and minorities in the context of development or social change. Seventeen private universities and one international university offered either a C4D class or C4D-related classes (Ohio University, 2017).

Because C4D is a multidisciplinary field, the capacity assessment identified these academic disciplines, besides communication, media and journalism, for future capacity building and strengthening: anthropology, social work, sociology, economics, women/gender studies, development studies, environmental science or geography, health, nutrition and population science.

The capacity assessment identified five enablers and five major barriers to institutionalizing C4D curriculum and research. The five key enablers are: 1) University Grants Commission (UGC), the regulatory body for higher education, 2) the range of disciplines in the social and applied sciences with potential for C4D curriculum, 3) faculty members who were already teaching C4D classes, 4) development partners using C4D approaches, such as social and behavioural change communication and 5) UNICEF's field presence in Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram, Sylhet, and Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions with offices that could build linkages between sub-national universities, government and NGO partners for collaborative projects and research (Ohio University, 2017).

The five major barriers to institutionalisation were: 1) large class sizes, high student-faculty ratio, and heavy teaching loads; 2) lack of recognition for commissioned research in faculty evaluation and promotion criteria; 3) lack of flexibility in the curriculum and interdisciplinary collaboration among students; 4) lack of research culture due to lack of funding for applied research; and 5) differences in priorities between universities and development organisations, e.g. lack of clear and measurable benefits for universities in terms of enrolment, funding and institutional reputation (Ohio University, 2017).

Other studies have reached similar conclusions. For example, the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3, 2014), a USAID-funded global communication capacity building project, conducted an assessment in 2014 to identify challenges and areas for interventions in SBCC education, practice and research at the university level in 12 developing and least developed countries. Some of the challenges identified by the HC3 were similar to the UNICEF study findings in Bangladesh. These included lack of SBCC expertise among faculty, time constraints of academic calendar, limited funding and resources for SBCC projects, limited funding for academic journal subscriptions, "administrative complexity" in introducing or modifying a curriculum, and limited networking opportunities with SBCC professionals or developmental organisations (HC3, 2014). Based on the assessment, the HC3 recommended strengthening practical experiences for students, creating learning exchange opportunities, and adding classes that focus on SBCC competencies (HC3, 2014).

In Bangladesh, UNICEF solicited suggestions from individual faculty, department chairs, deans, and Vice Chancellors (VCs). They offered two key guidelines. First, capacity had to be built selectively because not all institutions had the flexibility, human resources, or interest to integrate C4D into curricula. Second, the approach had to be organic, giving each department freedom to create new programmes, classes, or sequences, or integrate C4D into existing curricula (Mould, 2020).

Social Ecological Model

Because the process of introducing a new class or curriculum involves faculty, administrators, such as deans and VCs, the university's academic council and the UGC (UNICEF, 2017), it is appropriate to evaluate the approach through the lens of the Social Ecological Model (SEM). This model recognises a complex interplay among factors at four interrelated levels – individual, relationship, community, and societal – that influences outcomes (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991; Dougherty, Fields, and Schuman, 2017; CDC, 2021).

The SEM has been utilised as a framework for improving doctoral education in social work in the U.S. at both the individual and programmatic levels. While advancing this framework, Dougherty, Fields and Schuman (2017) argue that intrapersonal factors such as student and faculty attitudes and knowledge, relationships among students and relationships between students and faculty, organisational culture such as active involvement of students in a programme's development, community factors such as recognition and visibility of student work on campus/with university community, and relevance of student work to national public policies can not only have distinctive influence on the improvement of a doctoral programme but also can influence each other.

Communication for Change, a USAID-funded project also known as C-Change, established Centers of Excellence (COEs) at four universities in South Africa, Nigeria, Albania, and Guatemala to address social issues through a culturally appropriate SBCC education. C-Change utilised existing capacity and adopted university-specific strategies (Greiner, Christofides, Tufte, Kim, and Bockh, 2012); the goal was to strengthen individual and institutional competencies in meeting local and regional demands in SBCC. Although the process was not described within a SEM framework (Figure 1), it identified key players within universities who could support capacity strengthening in SBCC education, research and practice, and local development agencies for collaboration with universities.

The SEM should be viewed within an institutional context in which capacity building and advocacy are conducted at all levels (Mould, 2020). Preparing faculty to teach C4D is not, by itself, sufficient; such efforts need to be supported by UGC, VCs, deans, department chairs, faculty colleagues and local/international development agencies that can forge partnerships for research and experiential learning. Faculty members teaching a C4D class require expert-level knowledge; a regulatory agency such as UGC, university administrators, department chairs and faculty colleagues need an overview of the field and data that show the growing job market for graduates with C4D skills.
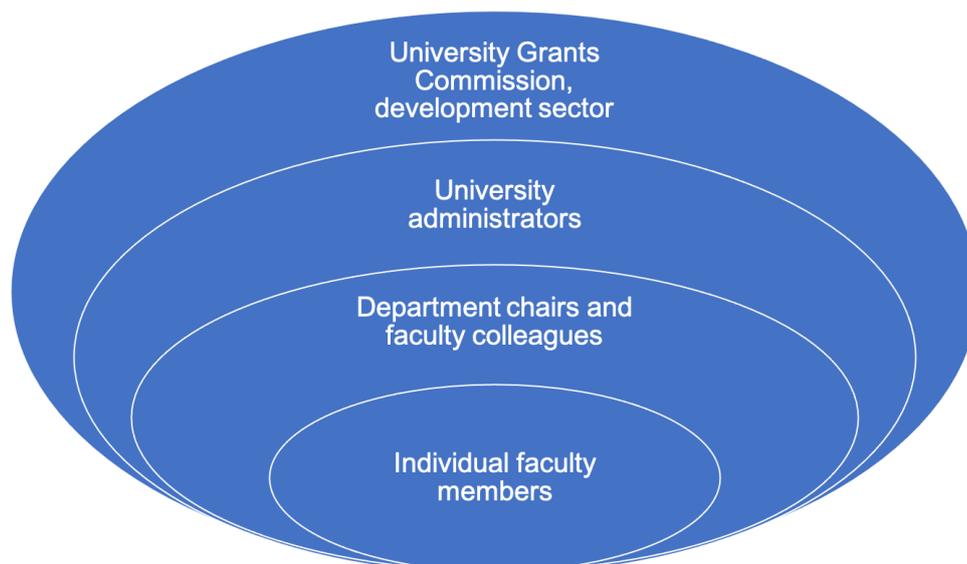

Figure 1: The Social Ecological Model (SEM) as Framework for University C4D Capacity Development

All these stakeholders need to be in sync or support each other on academic programme planning. Hence this case study seeks to know:

RQ 1: How was the Social-Ecological Model (SEM) applied to implement the capacity building initiative on C4D curriculum and research in Bangladesh universities?

RQ 2: What were the initial outcomes of this capacity building initiative in C4D curriculum and research?

RQ 3: What follow up actions/programmes can be taken to sustain the efforts around strengthening C4D capacity?

Methodology

To respond to RQ 1, both document analysis and thematic analysis methods were utilised. The document analysis identified capacity building steps undertaken by stakeholders – faculty, administrators, and UGC – for institutionalizing C4D education. Because this article's authors were involved in the design and implementation of the capacity building initiative, their periodic reports to UNICEF on field visits and programme activities are analysed.

Reflexive thematic analysis was used to categorise capacity building events and initiatives. Reflexive thematic analysis is an analytical framework that can be used for identifying categorical information about an issue/phenomenon (The University of Auckland n.d.; Maguire and Delahunt 2017, p.3352). For thematic categorisation of capacity building initiatives, this study utilised the SEM framework's four interrelated factors (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991; Dougherty, Fields, and Schuman, 2017) in the context of universities – individuals (i.e. faculty teaching C4D classes and conducting research on C4D topics), relationship (i.e. understanding of and support from department chairs and faculty colleagues), community (i.e. support from university senior administrators) and society (i.e. UGC's support and partnerships between development actors/agencies and universities).

To respond to RQ 2 regarding the preliminary outcomes of capacity building initiatives, this study utilised a combination of field research and qualitative interviews conducted via email. Additionally, UNICEF C4D field officers in four divisions[ii] of Bangladesh were interviewed over email. They were specifically asked "How did curriculum development lead universities to become involved in community-based projects?" To gather information on RQ 3, this study also asked C4D field officers to list and describe follow up actions to strengthening C4D education and research. Responses to these two major questions were very detailed, ranging from 1 – 3 pages.

Findings

RQ 1: Implementation of SEM in Capacity Building Initiative

Individual faculty members

Teaching & Curriculum. The 2017 capacity assessment revealed that most C4D-related academic departments did not have enough expertise to teach classes on C4D. UNICEF in partnership with UGC then commissioned Ohio University to run an e-learning class from February to May 2018, for 51 faculty interested in teaching C4D topics and classes. Participants represented not only communication and media disciplines but also the social (e.g. social work, economics, anthropology, sociology) and applied sciences (e.g. nutrition, environmental science and disaster management). The e-learning course[iii] consisted of six two-week modules with readings, resources, assignments, and a discussion forum, hosted on a Moodle learning platform.

A total of 30 faculty—19 from five public and 11 from four private universities—who participated in the e-learning course were invited to the follow-up curriculum development workshop in June 2018. Working in multi-disciplinary groups, they started drafting topics, assignments, and activities for a modular C4D curriculum. By the end of the workshop, faculty were making plans on how to design standalone classes and build C4D content into existing classes. To offer more hands-on guidance, Ohio University team members, along with UNICEF staff, visited five public and four private

universities in September, 2018, to observe faculty teaching of C4D class and topics, to advise them how to integrate C4D into classes in their disciplines, to make class presentations, and to advocate with VCs, deans, department chairs and faculty colleagues.

The Ohio University team, working from the drafts from the June 2018 curriculum development workshop, developed eight modules (Table 1). Each is self-contained, with overview text, readings, PowerPoints, discussion questions, assignments, and other resources, making it easy to integrate them into classes, both online and face-to-face.

Table 1: C4D Modules

a.	Introduction to C4D	b.	C4D theories and applications
c.	C4D planning, monitoring and evaluation	d.	Participatory Research
e.	Communication approaches	f.	ICTs for development
g.	Environmental communication	h.	Health communication

Research Skills. The 2017 capacity assessment survey revealed that improving research skills and productivity was a high priority for some faculty members. With heavy teaching loads and limited support for research, especially at public institutions, they welcomed professional development opportunities. Even experienced researchers said they needed mentoring in preparing and writing up their research for submission to international peer-reviewed journals. In C4D, the realms of research and curriculum are closely linked. Faculty need research experience to teach quantitative, qualitative, and participatory research methods, and to supervise fieldwork and thesis and dissertation projects.

Capacity building was carried out through a research skills workshop in August 2018. Nineteen faculty from nine universities, from disciplines including sociology, anthropology, mass communication and journalism, and agriculture, participated. The workshop covered topics such as formative research, including Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) surveys and studies that explore communication channels and motivators and barriers to behaviour change, development of data collection tools including survey questionnaires, and monitoring and evaluation techniques. Participants worked in teams to draft proposal outlines in response to Terms of Reference in three areas of child related outcomes critical in Bangladesh -- child labour, early marriage, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).

Relationship Building and Community

A major component of SEM is the relationship between the individual and the system within which one operates. The capacity building programme included activities to create awareness about the benefits of C4D education both at the departmental (i.e. relationship factor) and senior administrator levels (i.e. community factor). It was essential to build relationships with administrators, including department chairs, deans, and VCs, and with faculty colleagues because departmental support is essential to introduce changes to an existing curriculum. Even before capacity building in teaching and research was launched, UNICEF partnered with the UGC to organise a three-day workshop in Dhaka in August 2017 to share basic concepts and principles of C4D and their relevance across academic disciplines and to start building a network of faculty members interested in integrating C4D at their institutions. A total of 48 faculty and administrators from 12 universities attended.

Ohio University team members visited 15 departments in five public and four private universities in September 2018. They not only monitored the teaching of C4D in a classroom setting but assisted faculty who had participated in the curriculum development and research skills workshops in presenting their initiatives to their colleagues. Team members also made presentations to students to introduce them to the concept and scope of C4D. They met with department chairs and other faculty members to discuss opportunities for curricular integration and applied research, and briefed VCs, deans, and other senior administrators on the initiative.

UGC and Development Actors/Agencies

Because UGC is the regulatory body for academic standards at universities, UNICEF Bangladesh involved it from the beginning of the programme. The C4D workshop in 2017 and the C4D curriculum development symposium and national research conference in 2019 were jointly organised by UNICEF and UGC.

Although the lockdown that followed the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh delayed the dissemination of the eight-module C4D curriculum, by the end of 2020 UNICEF had distributed print copies to the 10 universities that participated in curriculum development, mostly through its field offices. The free, open-source curriculum can be accessed through University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh's website (https://sss.ulab.edu.bd/msj/unicef-ugc-proposed-c4d-curriculum/). It is available for educational, training, and non-commercial uses and is designed to be flexible, enabling users to select those modules and units that best suit their discipline and the needs of their students or trainees.

In 2019, UGC and UNICEF announced the launch of a competitive C4D Research Fellowships Programme. Its goals are 1) to sponsor research that supports Bangladesh's efforts to meet the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to the survival, development, protection and participation of children, adolescents, and their communities and 2) to promote scholarship within the country, as well as the voice of the global south in C4D-related academic and research discourse.

Representatives from government organisations, development organisations and NGOs participated in the C4D research conference in April 2019. Faculty participants in the conference were able to network and share their research with development professionals.

RQ 2: Initial Outcomes of Capacity Building Initiative

Because the programme took place in phases--from conceptualisation and assessment to awareness creation to curriculum and research skills development--over a four-year period (2016 – 2020), this study seeks to identify initial outcomes, such as curriculum adoption, participation in research fellowships and partnerships between universities and development organisations. Outcomes depended on collective support and efforts at various levels of the SEM – individual-, community or organisational- and societal or national-level stakeholders.

Adoption of C4D Curriculum

Faculty were invited to present their curriculum development initiatives at a UNICEF-UGC curriculum symposium in Dhaka in April 2019. The symposium demonstrated how C4D-related academic units were moving ahead with new class creation or integration of new modules on C4D in existing curricula. Faculty from nine universities in five divisions (Figure 2) made presentations on curriculum design, teaching, how they had integrated C4D into different disciplines, pedagogy, fieldwork, and other topics.

The focus of the curriculum development initiative was on competencies—the knowledge and skills students need to work in the development sector. Faculty have also adopted new approaches, moving away from traditional lecture- and examination-based pedagogy to more participatory methods, including group work, field research assignments and problem-based learning. Between 2018 and 2020, ten universities either introduced a new class on C4D or integrated C4D content into their existing curricula (Table 2).

Table 2: C4D curriculum adoption/adaptation by universities

Institution	Undergraduate classes	Post-graduate classes	Undergraduate sequence or track introduced	Disciplines integrating CD content in existing classes
Public				
Khulna University	Development Studies, Sociology	Development Studies		Environmental Sciences, Economics
Rajshahi University	Mass Comm/ Journalism	Mass Comm/ Journalism		Public Administration
University of Chittagong	Communication and Journalism			
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST)	Social Work, Anthropology	Social Work, Anthropology		Economics
Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU)	Nutrition and Food Science	Disaster Response Management		Computer Science and Engineering. Emergency Management
University of Barishal				Sociology, Mass Communication
Private				
University of Liberal Arts (ULAB), Dhaka	Media Studies and Journalism	Media Studies and Journalism	Media Studies and Journalism	
Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), Dhaka	Media and Communication	Media and Communication	Media and Communication	
American International University, Bangladesh (AIUB), Dhaka				Public Health, Development Studies, Media and Mass Communication, Economics, Business Administration
Port City International University, Chattogram	Journalism and Media Studies			Media Studies and Journalism

Demonstration of research skills in C4D

The research conference, "Fostering C4D Research to Achieve Results for Children," jointly organised by UGC and UNICEF Bangladesh in April 2019, received an enthusiastic response from faculty and post-graduate student researchers and from the development sector. The call for submissions received more than 90 abstracts which far exceeded the organisers' expectations. A programme committee was formed, consisting of eight senior Bangladesh academics, three development practitioners with advanced degrees, and UNICEF staff, along with members of the Ohio University team. In a blind review process, 45 abstracts were selected for presentation, and grouped into thematic sessions; another 14 were selected for poster presentations. For the one-day conference, four parallel sessions were scheduled in three 90-minute time slots, with four or five presentations per session. The conference concluded with a roundtable on publishing in peer-reviewed journals. All research presented had one element in common—it was *applied*, in other words research that can potentially be used to design or inform development interventions.
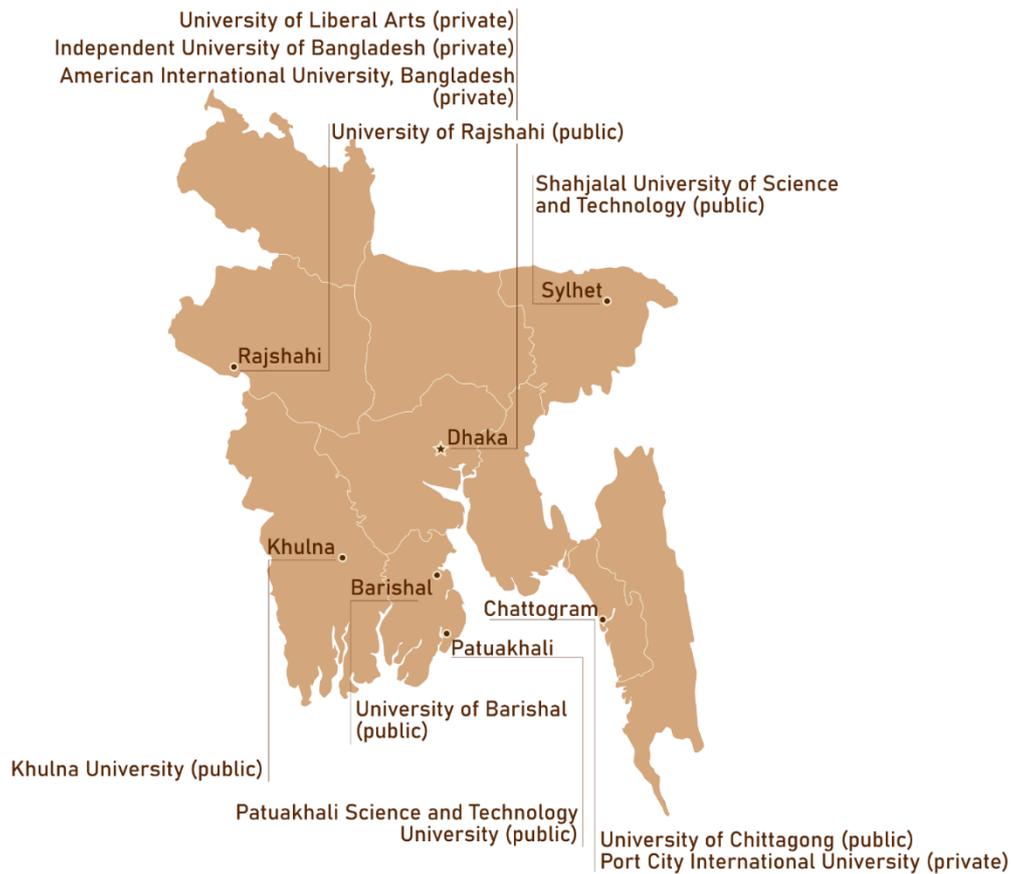
Figure 2: Location of Bangladesh Universities that adopted C4D curriculum

To keep this C4D research momentum going, UGC and UNICEF Bangladesh initially planned for a research fellowship competition for university faculty for five years. A total of 36 proposals for the first (2020) year of the programme were received, and three fellowships were awarded to public university faculty members. The fellows were required to submit at least one article for publication in a peer-reviewed journal and present preliminary findings at the next UNICEF-UGC research conference. As of late 2020, research fellows had made considerable progress despite the COVID-19 pandemic which delayed the issuance of contracts and payments by UGC and conducting field research.

Collaboration among UNICEF, Development Agencies and Universities

Four UNICEF C4D field officers working in Barishal, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions reported collaboration between faculty and local development agencies/initiatives, including UNICEF-supported projects for adolescents and children.

Faculty at Khulna University, PSTU and Rajshahi University participated in the midterm evaluations of community engagement and the social and behaviour change component of UNICEF's Local Governance for Children (LGC) programme in districts in Khulna and Barishal divisions.

Several faculty members at Rajshahi University have been engaged in UNICEF-supported projects and initiatives implemented by government partners and NGOs, such as a baseline survey for ending child marriage. Rajshahi faculty members also organised webinar consultations on adolescent issues and roles of local governments in collaboration with Bangladesh Betar, the GoB's s radio network, and civil society organisation partners. In 2020, as part of UNICEF-supported COVID-19 response project, mass communication and journalism faculty members at Rajshahi formed the North Bengal COVID-19 Journalists' Forum with 64 journalists from print, electronic and online media covering all 16 districts in Rangpur and Rajshahi Divisions. They provided technical guidance and online facilitation to this independent journalists' platform for publishing accurate reporting and human-

interest stories on COVID-19 pandemic. The goal was to strengthen the role of mass media in raising awareness, dispelling myths about the pandemic and promoting stories around COVID-19 response.

In Khulna Division, the UNICEF field office has undertaken a number of initiatives with Khulna University, including a 2019 capacity-building workshop on C4D for 25 sectoral department and state-run radio station regional officials and NGO staff. The goal was to build a common understanding of C4D among UNICEF's development partners and establish a divisional-level C4D forum that brings together academic institutions and development professionals to exchange knowledge and create C4D programmes appropriate to local context. In 2020, Khulna and PSTU faculty led webinars on risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) during the COVID-19 pandemic and launched campaigns to engage students in promoting awareness and preventative health behaviours. Khulna University's Environmental Science department faculty organised an orientation on climate change and its impacts on children for Khulna City Corporation and regional (Khulna) state-run radio station in 2020. A faculty member from PSTU's Community Health and Hygiene Department launched a Facebook page to promote social behavioural change communication materials, including public service announcements, of local development agencies including UNICEF initiatives geared towards communities in Patuakhali district.

Through this C4D capacity building initiative, Ujjiban, a project of Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs, partnered with Shahjalal University in Sylhet in 2018 to conduct field research in Chittagong and Sylhet on family planning and Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH).

RQ 3: Follow up actions/programmes to sustain the efforts around strengthening C4D curriculum and academic research in Bangladesh Universities.

To sustain curriculum innovations in C4D and foster district and local-level formative research in Bangladesh universities, UNICEF's C4D field officers recommended the following future action plans:

- Continued engagement with UGC in holding follow up meetings with participating universities. In this regard, UNICEF can implement a multi-year systematic costed plan to support universities through UGC;
- Developing partnerships or letters/framework of cooperation with universities at the subnational/regional level to encourage more district and local-level C4D research;
- Organizing regular briefings for VCs and departments on UNICEF's projects in the communities that universities serve;
- Longer-term coaching/mentoring support from global experts to strengthen curriculum and research skills among faculty;
- Creating internship opportunities in C4D for students;
- Small-scale funding to universities beyond the UGC-UNICEF research fellowship programme to engage in district-level applied research that can inform development projects by UNICEF and/or their development partners;
- Developing a forum or channel of communication for sharing findings of applied C4D research by faculty and students at universities with development actors at sub-national and national levels; and
- Networking with universities in other countries that have strong curricula and a research track record in C4D.

Conclusions

The SEM was applied to UNICEF's C4D capacity building initiative for Bangladesh universities at the individual, departmental, university and community levels between 2017 and 2020. Because factors at each of these four levels can influence each other, the team involved all stakeholders from the initiative's inception, starting with advocacy and partnership with UGC. The capacity assessment was helpful not only in examining the state of C4D curriculum and research but also in identifying the key

actors and decision-makers in higher education. Partnership with UGC early on and at each major step brought local and high-level ownership of this new programme.

The application of the SEM brought three major successes. One, this inclusive model created a supportive relationship between faculty teaching and proposing new curricula on C4D, department chairs, senior university administrators and the UGC, with new C4D class or content introduced at ten universities (Table 2). Two, emphasizing research along with teaching C4D in the capacity building process resulted in a strong response from the academic community in submissions to the C4D research conference and the research fellowship programme. Three, academic departments that sent faculty to the C4D capacity building workshops and adopted new C4D curricula initiated as well as participated in joint projects with development agencies experienced in C4D education and research.

Continuation of these initial successes depends on, as the C4D field officers suggested, continued engagement between national and local government agencies and the development sector with universities. Additionally, the higher education system can offer small grants to regional universities to help create partnerships with local development agencies through local/regional development projects. As UNICEF's C4D initiatives in Bangladesh universities transition from capacity building to capacity strengthening, the SEM could be expanded to include local/regional level stakeholders such as municipal and district administrations, community leaders, civil society and faith-based organisations.

Disclaimer

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Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

[i] Used interchangeably with Social and Behaviour Change Communication, and encompasses strategies for behaviour change, social norms change, community engagement, community mobilisation, social mobilisation, interpersonal communication, information education and communication, communicating with communities, and programme communication.

[ii] Bangladesh's geographic areas or 64 districts are divided into eight administrative divisions. These divisions are Barishal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Sylhet (Bangladesh National Portal, 2021).

[iii] The e-learning course drew on content, readings, discussions and assignments developed by Ohio University for a global learning course on C4D for UNICEF staff. The course, held annually from 2011 to 2016, was offered in a blended (online modules and a two-week in-person workshop) format, and was completed by more than 400 staff from UNICEF country and regional offices and New York headquarters.