

Statement of Interest:

I am writing to express my keen interest in a general seat on the HSG Board. Since my student life, I have volunteered my time to many social, cultural, and professional organizations. During my early student life, I served as the top executive of the leading debating clubs, federations, and socio-cultural and literary organizations of the Bangladeshi educational institutions I studied. I was one of the founders of the leading Bangladeshi youth organization, United Nations Youth and Students Association of Bangladesh, which we started in 2001. My role in this organization was to provide leadership support and policy guidance, maintain communication with national and international stakeholders, generate funds, foster collaborations, and organize and lead nationwide events in coordination with UN agencies, NGOs, and educational institutions in Bangladesh. I served as the Director-International Affairs (2003-2005), President (2006-2008), and the Vice-Chair of its Board of Trustees (since 2009).

In my professional life, i.e., after completing my MPH in 2008 from the BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, I served in professional associations such as the Bangladesh Medical Association, Public Health Association of Bangladesh, International Public Policy Association, Society for Implementation Science in Nutrition, International Society of Global Health, Bangladesh Non-Communicable Disease Forum (Joint Secretary since 2021), Health Systems Global, and Public Health Foundation of Bangladesh (Executive Director in 2019-2020 and Vice-Chairperson in 2021-2022). As part of the Public Health Foundation, I provided leadership to the organization in its regular functioning as well as organizing events, mobilized funds for more than 20 events, provided guidance and support in the recruitment of new members, maintained cooperation and collaboration with different national and international organizations, including different organs of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of Bangladesh, and forged strong civil society activism during the whole COVID-19 pandemic in favor of a public health-oriented evidence-based pandemic response.

I have been involved with HSG since its inception in 2010 and contributed to the organization of the First Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in Montreaux, Switzerland. I have maintained membership in the organization and participated in different capacities in all the HSG symposiums ever since. As an Emerging Voice for Global Health (first cohort and first Bangladeshi in 2010), I have been closely involved in the governance of the Emerging Voices TWG. I have also been the Regional Champion for the South East Asia Region of the Teaching and Learning TWG. I am also a member of the Translating Evidence into Action TWG. As an active member of Asia and the Pacific Regional Network, I have contributed to the expansion of HSG values, principles, and activities in the region.

Given my past experiences and demonstrated engagements with similar local organizations (e.g., Public Health Foundation of Bangladesh) and different TWGs of HSG, I reaffirm my interest in serving as a Board Member (general seat) and express my commitment to the development of the field of HPSR.

Answer to questions:

1. What are your thoughts on capacity building and empowering early career health policy and systems researchers to represent the field in the future? 2. How do you think HSG can contribute to translating cutting-edge HPSR knowledge at the national policy level? 3. Do you have any plans for inter-regional HPSR dialogues, engagements, and exchanges? 4. How may you best express your position on decolonizing the global health movement?

Answer to 1, 2, 3: As an Emerging Voice (EV), I strongly advocate for capacity building and empowering early career researchers. EV is a great platform not only to build capacity but also to translate HPSR knowledge. Capacity building and empowerment of the early career researchers can be achieved through inter-regional dialogues, engagements, and exchanges. Based on my long involvement in youth activism in Bangladesh, I observed that high-level decision/policy-makers are often more open to students and youths. Policy-makers feel less threatened by them and seem to listen to the youth's innovative (and even provocative) ideas. This characteristic may be exploited by encouraging and facilitating the early career researchers to meet with policy-makers. These meetings may be arranged exclusively for the young researchers, i.e., without the presence of the senior scientists. This approach may be further strengthened or intensified by bringing in young researchers from different countries, perhaps, regional countries, should funding be available.

Answer to 4: I feel that inappropriately planned 'decolonizing global health' approaches may eventually end up decentralizing the 'colonization' and promoting 'micro-colonization' at the local level. In order to make the movement meaningful, instead of just choosing an 'expert' from an under-represented country, we should be more careful in selecting the ones who actually represent the under-represented communities in that country. My experience working on community empowerment showed me that we often only empower those who are actually better off in the context of that community. This eventually worsens the existing power disparity in that community unless we specifically empower the real powerless. Based on this understanding, we need to find the HPSR actors who really represent and are the voice of the society we are keen to decolonize. In my opinion, 'decolonizing' is not quite simple; it requires more meticulous attention to what we actually want to achieve by the movement and how.

1. How will you ensure that health policy and systems research remain central to HSG vs it being another global health society? 2. How would you distinguish between a health policy and systems research agenda and a global health agenda? 3. How would you ensure representation and decision making by LMIC members in HSG affairs? 4. What do you think are the key challenges that lie ahead for health policy and systems research? 5. How would you mobilise further funding for health policy and systems research?

Answer to 1, 2: HPSR is an evolving field with considerable overlaps with many disciplines. Disciplines evolve for their survival and to remain relevant to the changing needs of society. We have several methodology readers in the field, which help the discipline stay on its course. As a board member, I would try to understand from the members the need for more such readers and contribute to the updating of the existing ones.

Answer to 3: Please see my 'Answer to 4' in the previous cell.

Answer to 4: In the post-Covid world, seizing the opportunity to establish the need for a sound HPSR is a challenge if sufficient funding and country-level support are not ensured.

Answer to 5: Only 2% of the total budget for health is dedicated to strengthening health systems. Increasing this percentage and the total budgetary allocation depends on effective advocacy based on pragmatic strategy. I would mobilize further funding by reviewing and learning from past fundraising efforts and diversifying sources, channels, approaches, and innovative activities. In addition to research and capacity-building funds, I will find funding to embed the research in-country health interventions and non-traditional collaborations. An example of non-traditional exchange collaboration may be the youth exchange programs with a view to policy influence. Initiatives like Emerging Voices for Global Health, Lancet Young Voices, etc., can be valuable avenues for such collaborations for resource generation. Finally, I will develop a clear evaluation plan to show how the funds work, for whom, and in what capacity.

1. What are HSG's 3 key priorities for the next four years, as a professional society, and in terms of strengthening HPSR and contributing to health system development in the post COVID era? 2. What are the 2-3 key priorities for HSG in terms of engaging and supporting its members? 3. What organisational experience will you bring to the role of HSG Board member and why is that valuable?

Answer to 1: I am sure all board members and the general members will add diversity to the priority and activities of the HSG. Based on my own expertise, my priority areas would be implementation research, community empowerment, HRH performance and responsiveness. However, I am open to collaborating with colleagues on other HSG priorities, e.g., climate-sensitive health systems, gender sensitivity, health systems resilience in a post-Covid world, etc.

Answer to 2: Please see my 'Answer to 1, 2, 3' in the first cell. In short, capacity building and empowering early career researchers, helping HPSR researchers in translating knowledge at the national policy level, and facilitating inter-regional HPSR dialogues, engagements, and exchanges.

Answer to 3: I have worked in several professional membership-based organizations for a long time. I acquired negotiation, organizational, diplomatic, collaboration, public communication, advocacy, and leadership skills throughout my long involvement with these organizations. These skills may help me effectively play my HSG board member role.

1. What is your plan to contribute to increase the commitment of HSG toward environmental sustainability?

Answer to 1: Health systems of most countries are not adaptable to environmental sustainability issues. Despite its relevance in the SDG period and beyond, climate change has not been a significant focus of HPSR. The nexus of environmental sustainability and the health system is an important and emerging field. As a board member, I want to facilitate learning and knowledge exchange, develop research methods, and build technical capacity for integrating environmental sustainability into the HPSR discussion. A few of my HPSR and EV colleagues are already working hard on this issue. I will join hands with them to avoid reinvention of the wheel in this regard.

1. As gender equity is no longer a priority theme for the conference how would you raise the profile of this crucial issue?

Answer to 1: Gender has always been a significant theme in HSG activities. HSG has been promoting awareness and action to address gender power imbalances and structural barriers women face in health policy actions, health systems research, and implementation. As a board member, I express my commitment to continue the legacy of HSG in upholding its profile on gender issues.