**Introduction**

The Government of Bangladesh is directly implementing a voucher scheme in 54 sub-districts without involving a voucher agency. Analysis of the implementation context is important to understand policy and design issues and challenges. This study presents and discusses the policy challenges and design barriers faced by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in implementing maternal health voucher scheme in Bangladesh.

**Policy Challenges**

The study identified a number of policy challenges related to the demand-side voucher program, such as how to ensure adequate incentives for the providers, implementing uniform mechanism of fund transfer under a decentralised system, encouraging market competition in the program area and increasing supply of healthcare providers.

**Conclusions**

To improve the performance of the demand-side strategy, it has become important to adopt some supply-side interventions. In poor developing countries, a demand-side strategy may not be very effective without significant expansion of the service delivery capacity of health facilities at the sub-district level.

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**Policy challenges and design barriers in implementing voucher schemes - insights from Bangladesh**

Shakil Ahmed, Mahmud Khan

### Steps taken | Role of Stakeholders | Problems faced or identified
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| Fund and vouchers were made available at the sub-district for distribution | Funds and vouchers are managed and supervised by sub-district and union DSF committee | Fund and vouchers were not available on a timely basis |
| Target pregnant women identification process | Union committee members identify the target group and issue vouchers to target women | Errors in targeting |
| Distribution of vouchers to pregnant women | Family Welfare Assistants and Health Assistants help in the distribution of vouchers | Not enough vouchers supplied to the local DSF committee for distribution |
| Pregnant women receive vouchers | Pregnant women seek antenatal, delivery and postnatal care from designated service providers | Women did not receive cash incentive on time |

Emergency Obstetric Care often not available in the local area.

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