

# Democracy and Health Care

Democracy serves as a tool for enhancing human well-being. It increases government accountability to its citizens. Free and fair elections incentivize political leaders to prioritize the welfare of voters. Therefore, global health advocates may need to engage in the promotion of democracy.<sup>1</sup> Democracy was established to empower individuals to engage in work.<sup>2</sup> In my view, democracy represents the freedom to think, express oneself, and connect with others; it allows everyone to contribute equally to the broader community and upholds the dignity of every community member.

Health is a fundamental human right and essential for life. Why is this so? Good health from birth significantly enhances survival chances. Poor health can hinder our ability to attend school or work, meet family obligations, and engage in societal activities, all of which are vital for the well-being of both individuals and communities. When we think of happiness, health often comes to mind. Thus, we believe that health is our most valuable asset, regardless of age, gender, race, or overall well-being. Consequently, health is a shared concern, and it is not something the state can achieve alone.

What is the most effective political system for ensuring the protection and advancement of health care? The options we face are democracy and autocracy. Autocratic regimes, like those in Cuba and China, are recognized for providing cost-effective health care but have struggled to meet the health needs of their populations as these needs evolve toward non-communicable diseases. In 2019, Bollyky et al. published findings in the *Lancet* indicating that democracies are better than autocracies in delivering improvements in health outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Traditionally, the relationship between democracy and health has been viewed as one-way, with democracy resulting in improved health outcomes. However, realizing the right to health also relies on safeguarding other rights, such as the rights to housing, education, adequate water and food, dignity, and information.

In Bangladesh, as in any civilization, human health is important for personal and social development. However, in Bangladesh, unlike many other societies, people have the constitutional right both to access health services and treatment that improves their health. Health is an important constitutional right in Bangladesh. Article 15(a) of the Bangladesh Constitution recognizes health as a fundamental right of every citizen and directs the government to implement this right. Article 18(1) states that improving food standards and improving public health is the primary responsibility of the government.<sup>4</sup> It is increasingly recognized that a healthy population is a key driver of economic growth and prosperity. Therefore, health should be a top priority for the Government of Bangladesh (GOB).

To discuss the benefits and drawbacks of democracy in a global context, we need to examine in detail the actors and policies that govern the formulation and implementation of health policies. People argue that the choice between independent democracies and authoritarian circumstances is crucial.<sup>5</sup> Democracy is motivated to provide prosperity, security and living without subjection to autocratic rule.<sup>6</sup> The political history of independent Bangladesh is replete with authoritarianism, political infighting, power grabs, illegal elections and legitimacy crisis.

At the historic juncture of Bangladesh's second independence, protests led by Generation 'Z' (GEN-Z) students forced the downfall of the autocratic regime. The brutality on student protesters reveals the totalitarian intentions of the prime minister and the resilience of confidence in democratic freedoms. These momentous events radically changed the nature of political ideas, practices and relations at the national and international levels. The "Chief Adviser" to the Interim Government tasked with peace and democratic renewal in Bangladesh. With the end of autocracy, there is an urgent need for reforms in various areas such as the constitution, police and military, judiciary, education and healthcare etc.

As health care has become a major worldwide concern, and after Bangladesh's second liberation, the health

care debate is one of the main issues of economic, social and political agenda. While the government is trying some structural reforms. We believe to improve the quality of health care services; health system would be consistent with achievable goals and within available resources. GOB should attempt to identify areas of health sector where reformation is needed through the research study. This study will prioritize the areas of the health sector reform according to the comments of different stakeholders and will try to figure out the way forward.

Democracy is generally better for our health. We believe this even in the face of health challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and immediate past autocratic regime. Similarly, in current geopolitical debates, we should not fall into the trap of healthy polarization of debate. Therefore, a general analysis of effective health economics policy undoubtedly includes aspects of public rights. In a democracy, Government of Bangladesh (GOB) should value all people and will actively promote wellness programs for all citizens for better overall health.<sup>4</sup> We should reduce out-of-pocket costs for peoples, and improving the quality of healthcare for all. We would work to increase price transparency across the healthcare system for all payers and reduce paperwork through uniform medical billing. We would support policies that increase the number of primary care practitioners, registered nurses, dentists, and dental therapists, especially in rural and low-income metropolitan areas, so it's easier for every Bangladeshi to access preventive and primary health care.

Nevertheless, health sector reforms should be sustainable, objective, planned and evidence based. Clearly, health sector reform should include broader action on the health system, including health workers, social and political motivations. After all, reforms

should be passed by lawmakers in parliament. Finally, we conclude that 'democracy', 'under-development', 'mass poverty' and 'social inequality' are major threats to universal healthcare for all.

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