

CONCEPT NOTE

Scaling Faith-Based Diabetes Prevention in Bangladesh and Beyond

A National Innovation with Global Impact

1. Background and Rationale

Bangladesh is facing a rapidly increasing burden of diabetes and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs), posing a major challenge to the health system and national development. Despite ongoing efforts, early detection, awareness, and sustained lifestyle modification remain limited, particularly among underserved and rural populations.

To address this gap, the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh (BADAS), in collaboration with the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and the Islamic Foundation, has developed and implemented an innovative faith-based diabetes prevention model. This initiative leverages the strong social influence of religious leaders to promote health awareness, early screening, and behaviour change at the community level.

The model has generated robust scientific evidence, including a cluster-randomised clinical trial demonstrating approximately 42–43% reduction in progression to diabetes among high-risk individuals. It has also received recognition from global partners and represents a cost-effective, culturally grounded, and scalable solution, aligned with Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and SDG targets.

2. Program Overview

The program—initially implemented through mosques and community religious platforms—integrates health promotion into existing social structures.

Key Components:

- Engagement and training of religious leaders (Imams and other faith leaders)
- Establishment of “**Diabetes Corners**” for screening and counselling
- Delivery of faith-aligned lifestyle messages during sermons (Khutbah and equivalent teachings)
- Community-based screening for blood glucose and blood pressure
- Referral linkage to healthcare facilities (BADAS and government services)
- Digital tracking, registry, and follow-up systems

The program is now evolving into a multi-faith model, engaging leaders from Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist communities, ensuring inclusivity and broader applicability across diverse populations.

3. Achievements to Date

- Implementation in 100+ mosques across Bangladesh
- High community acceptance and participation
- Demonstrated clinical effectiveness (reduced diabetes incidence)
- Integration with national NCD prevention strategies
- Recognition by global organizations (WHO, IDF, WDF)
- Positioning Bangladesh as a global leader in faith-based health innovation

4. Strategic Opportunity

Building on this success, Bangladesh has a unique opportunity to scale this model nationally and globally.

A. National Scale-Up

- Expansion across all districts and community platforms
- Integration with primary healthcare and NCD corners nationwide
- Strengthening collaboration between Ministry of Health and Ministry of Religious Affairs

B. Global Leadership

- Dissemination across 57 OIC Member States and beyond
- Establishment of Bangladesh as a Centre of Excellence for Faith-Based NCD Prevention
- Strengthening South–South collaboration and global partnerships

5. Proposed Initiative: International Prevention Summit & Dhaka Declaration

To accelerate scale-up and global adoption, Bangladesh will host a high-level International Prevention Summit on Faith-Based Diabetes Prevention in Dhaka.

Key Objectives:

- Present robust scientific evidence and program impact
- Facilitate policy dialogue among national and international stakeholders
- Promote multi-faith engagement in health and prevention
- Launch the Dhaka Declaration on Faith-Based Diabetes Prevention

Expected Outcomes:

- Endorsement of a global policy framework for faith-based NCD prevention
- Strengthened partnerships with WHO, IDF, WDF, OIC-COMSTECH, JICA, and other partners
- Commitment to national and international scale-up

6. Alignment with National and Global Priorities

This initiative directly supports:

- National NCD Control Program (NCDC)
- Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda
- SDG 3.4: Reduction of premature mortality from NCDs
- WHO Global Diabetes Compact
- Digital Health Strategy of Bangladesh
- Community-based primary healthcare strengthening

7. Implementation Framework

The program will be implemented through a **multi-sectoral collaboration model**:

- **BADAS** – Technical leadership and implementation
- **DGHS (MoHFW)** – Policy alignment and health system integration
- **Islamic Foundation & other faith institutions** – Faith network mobilization
- **Development Partners (WHO, WDF, JICA, IDF, OIC-COMSTECH)** – Technical and financial support

8. Request for Strategic Support

We respectfully seek support from government and development partners to:

- Endorse and integrate the program into national NCD strategies
- Facilitate multi-ministerial and multi-faith collaboration
- Support national scale-up and sustainability
- Enable international dissemination and adaptation
- Position Bangladesh as a global model for community-based NCD prevention

9. Conclusion

Bangladesh has demonstrated that faith, community, and science can work together to address one of the most pressing public health challenges of our time.

With strong leadership, multi-sectoral collaboration, and global partnerships, this model can be scaled nationally and internationally—transforming millions of lives.

Key Message

“From Faith to Health: A Bangladesh Model for the World”