

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: BANGLADESH



Congenital heart disease (CHD) poses a significant healthcare challenge in Bangladesh, a country with a population of 171 million people. Children's HeartLink is committed to working with local leaders in healthcare and government to transform pediatric cardiac care in the country, because **every child deserves a healthy heart.**

THE NEED FOR HEART CARE

- CHD is the second-leading cause of infant mortality
- 49,000 babies are born with CHD annually
- 12,000 babies born with CHD require heart surgery before their first birthday to survive

With screening, timely diagnosis and appropriate heart care most children born with CHD can survive and thrive. Yet, globally 90% of children go without. In Bangladesh, the high burden of pediatric cardiac cases, combined with limited specialized centers and a lack of training programs focused on heart care for children, contributes to very limited access to care. In addition, the cost of repairing a child's heart can create undo financial burden on families.

"In the whole country, we don't have more than 40 trained pediatric cardiologists. We need decentralization of this facility, so that these babies are screened and detected earlier."

— Dr. Nurul Hasan, pediatric cardiac intensivist,
National Heart Foundation Hospital & Research Institute



WORKING IN BANGLADESH

National Heart Foundation and Research Institute, well known as a national referral center for children of all ages with simple to high-complexity CHD, became the first Children's HeartLink hospital partner in Bangladesh in 2022. They serve 2,000 children with heart disease annually, performing more than 700 pediatric heart surgeries.

OUR HISTORY OF SUCCESS

Since 1969, Children's HeartLink has been dedicated to caring for children with heart disease. We invest in long-term partnerships with hospitals in underserved parts of the world to improve pediatric cardiac care programs. Through advanced medical education and advocating for policy change, Children's HeartLink partnerships lead to increased access to high-quality heart care, stronger pediatric cardiac care communities and increased global attention to congenital heart disease (CHD). As a result, more children receive treatment and more preventable deaths are averted.

Since inception, we have served 2+ million children with congenital heart disease, and in 2023 our medical volunteer teams trained nearly 5,000 clinicians.

THE NEED WORLDWIDE

One in 100 children is born with CHD worldwide. Making congenital heart diseases the most common birth defect and the top cause of infant deaths. In most regions of the world, parents have nowhere to turn for appropriate medical care.



PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Children's HeartLink linked National Heart Foundation and Research Institute with a volunteer pediatric cardiac care team from Leeds Children's Hospital, UK. Together, the two teams are working on:

- Hands-on training in the operating room, intensive care unit and pre/post-operation ward to build skills in CPR, bedside care and surgical techniques
- Ongoing case discussions to enhance knowledge, skills and communication among clinicians and support program growth and development.
- Partnering with national societies and international collaborations for further training and strategic guidance.

Through this partnership, National Heart Foundation and Research Institute aims to become a Children's HeartLink Center of Excellence and a regional training hub for pediatric cardiac clinicians. The initiative creates opportunity to grow pediatric heart care in the country.

In addition to the National Heart Foundation and Research Institute partnership, Children's HeartLink is developing strategic partnerships with thought leaders, professional societies and stakeholders in the country to assist with improving the referral pathway and the national policies to ensure sustainable impact and improve the lives of children with heart disease for years to come.

THE CHILDREN'S HEARTLINK APPROACH

Develop Centers of Excellence

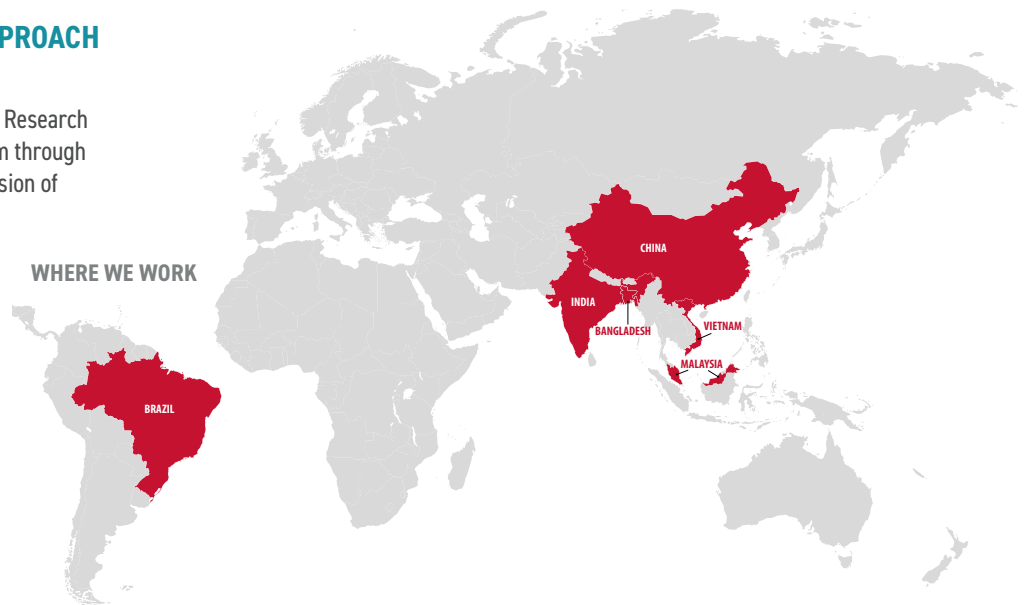
Partner with National Heart Foundation and Research Institute in Dhaka to strengthen their system through education and training to support the expansion of pediatric heart care.

Improve Referral Pathways

Enhance national systems for timely and appropriate referrals of children with CHD to treatment and care.

Advocate for Policy Changes

Work with national stakeholders to improve government policies impacting pediatric cardiac services.



Meet Heart Warrior Safwan

Safwan was born with CHD. His young life has been a testament to resilience, with multiple heart surgeries shaping his path. Today, he embodies the spirit of childhood, running, playing, singing and savoring the wonders of life just like other kids his age, showing us all the power of lifesaving heart care.

"The hope is that they [National Heart Foundation and Research Institute] can set up some kind of hub and spoke model with a center that's really solid, to enable them to train. And then suddenly the country has a very established cardiac program that is offering the very best care to the children of Bangladesh."

— Prof. Dr. Jamie Bentham, pediatric cardiologist, Leeds Children's Hospital, UK