

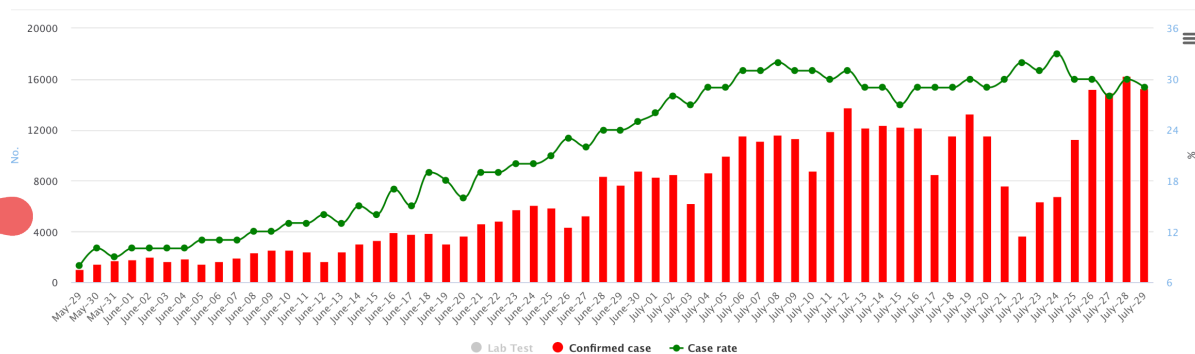
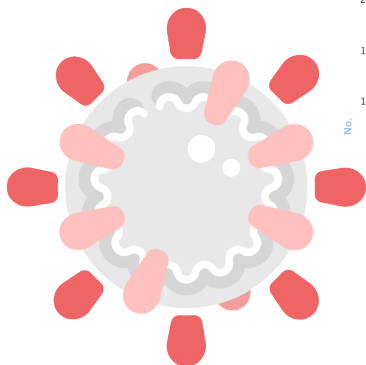


Health for All Now!
People's Health Movement
Bangladesh

TWN
Third World Network

Civil Society Workshop on Emerging Issues in Access to Treatment for Covid-19 in Bangladesh

August 5, 2021



The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the deep inequalities in accessing health and healthcare including medicines, diagnostics and the disparity in accessing vaccines has aggravated the situation. Often trade and trade agreements tend to hinder access to medicines especially in developing and least developed countries. The cost of medicines and medical diagnostics is a critical determinant of access to treatment for those who need it.

The World Trade organization (WTO) mandated Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement sets out a minimum standard of protection for intellectual property. Every member of WTO, including Bangladesh, is obliged to comply with the provisions of TRIPS Agreement.

Bangladesh is expected to graduate from the LDC category (to become a developing country) in 2026. As an LDC, Bangladesh benefits from special treatment and differential treatment under the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In particular Bangladesh is exempted from having to implement obligations of the WTO Agreement on Intellectual Property (TRIPS Agreement). This means that Bangladesh does not have any obligation to grant or enforce pharmaceutical patents that grant exclusive rights to the patent holder. The absence of patent monopoly has greatly supported the emergence of a dynamic generic pharmaceutical industry, which has enabled the availability of more affordable treatments in Bangladesh and beyond.

Presently, Bangladesh's generic industry caters 97% of the local demand for medicines. It is also a major exporter to a large number of countries including regulated markets in Europe and the United States recently. During COVID-19 pandemic, in the absence of pharmaceutical patents, Bangladesh firms were the first to launch generic remdesivir for local use and for export. However, this advantage will be lost as Bangladesh progresses to developing country status, it will no longer enjoy exemption from implementing the TRIPS Agreement and will have to introduce pharmaceutical patents. It is important to understand the options available for Bangladesh as an LDC and as it progresses into a developing country.

Hence the objective of the informal workshop is to have a reflection and assessment on intellectual property and access to medicines issues in Bangladesh

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