

The USAID centrally-funded SPRING project (Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally) is managed by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., with partners Helen Keller International (HKI), Save the Children (SC), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and The Manoff Group. HKI and SC are taking the lead in scaling up programs in Bangladesh across Khulna and Barisal divisions.

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SPRING/Bangladesh

The Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project works in Bangladesh to improve maternal and child nutrition. In collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, SPRING uses strategic partnerships, targeted technical assistance, and innovative approaches that address the underlying causes of malnutrition to help drive down rates of stunting in resource-poor households along the country's coastal belt. SPRING/Bangladesh is helping drive down rates of stunting through strategic partnerships, targeted technical assistance, and innovative approaches that address underlying aspects of malnutrition in Bangladesh. With an alignment to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement and building on the Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA), SPRING also features nutrition-sensitive programming, such as agricultural linkages and the promotion of handwashing. A USAID-funded nutrition project, SPRING works through two U.S. Government foreign assistance initiatives: Feed the Future and Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths.

OBJECTIVES

- Scale up promotion of the Essential Nutrition Actions and the Essential Hygiene Actions (ENA/EHA) within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and in collaboration with non-governmental (NGO) health and agriculture projects.
- Enhance the capacity of frontline health and agriculture workers within the MOHFW and MOA, field and peer facilitators, and community groups to deliver quality nutrition services and counseling.
- Increase household access to and utilization of diversified foods through farmer nutrition schools (FNS).
- Enhance project learning and sharing.

STRATEGY

Collaboration Across Multiple Sectors

Collaboration is central to the SPRING/Bangladesh strategy. The partnerships SPRING builds increase opportunities to improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women and children under two through social and behavior change. SPRING's

government partners include the Directorate General of Health Services (including the National Nutrition Services and Community-Based Health Care), the Directorate General of Family Planning, and the Directorate General of Agricultural Extension. SPRING also works with a number of other USAID-funded projects, such as the Aquaculture for Income and Nutrition Project, the Livestock and Nutrition Project, the Horticulture Project, the NGO Health Service Delivery Project, and SHIKHA, as well as other groups, such as Alive & Thrive, FAO, and UNICEF.

Capacity Building Across Multiple Sectors

During its first two years of implementation, SPRING/Bangladesh trained health and agriculture workers on ENA and EHA. SPRING created a short and practical curriculum that develops the capacity of master trainers and enhances the ability of frontline health workers to support pregnant and lactating women and mothers with children under two through improved knowledge and counseling skills to help mothers adopt optimal nutrition and hygiene practices.

The training emphasizes the delivery of nutrition services to all existing health contacts in upazila health complexes, family welfare centers, and community clinics, as well as during satellite clinic and home visits. Since 2014, SPRING/Bangladesh has used the

Government of Bangladesh's Basic Nutrition Curriculum to train more than 4,500 health workers. To ensure that quality nutrition services are delivered effectively, SPRING/Bangladesh works hand-in-hand with MOHFW staff, conducting joint supportive supervision and home visits. SPRING believes that better service quality is critical to the sustainable behavior change necessary for improved nutrition.

SPRING/Bangladesh has also trained MOA Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs), or agriculture extension officers, on key components of nutrition and hygiene for households with pregnant and lactating women and mothers with children under two. The training enables SAAOs to identify opportunities to use their new knowledge and skills and to incorporate them into their routine agriculture extension work. Trained SAAOs have become advocates for nutrition for both male and female farmers.

SPRING/Bangladesh also contracts with four local NGOs, training their technical officers and field facilitators to support the FNS and promote peer community mobilization. The local NGO staff also work closely with MOHFW and MOA staff in the scaling up of ENA, EHA, and food production activities. Collaborating with local NGOs helps build their capacity and strengthens the project's engagement with the community through the NGOs' existing networks.

Farmer Nutrition Schools (integrating agriculture, nutrition, and hygiene)

SPRING/Bangladesh targets resource-poor households with pregnant and lactating women and women with children under the age of two by using the FNS model of group-based learning to enhance their access to diversified nutrient-rich vegetables, poultry, and fish. SPRING/Bangladesh provides a small quantity of seeds and intensive support on food production during two planting seasons, and also promotes year-round vegetable production. Producing fish and poultry are encouraged to enhance the nutritional value of the household diet and women's income-generating potential. Field facilitators work closely with FNS members to ensure that appropriate vegetable, poultry, and fish production practices are adopted. They also link agricultural topics to household food consumption, intra-household food distribution, and appropriate household dietary diversity, particularly for women and children. FNS members rear poultry and fish and grow a variety of seasonal, nutrient-rich vegetables and fruits. Each FNS group session incorporates key ENA and EHA messages and is designed to respond to the immediate needs of members; it also encourages creativity and independence. SPRING/Bangladesh provides support to "graduates," FNS members who have completed their training, to ensure that recommended nutrition and hygiene

practices continue after the project's intensive intervention period. A Community Nutrition Champion, elected by her peers in the FNS upon graduation, continues to promote the important messages learned through FNS and serves as a vital link to frontline government health services and her community.

Household Handwashing Stations

The inconvenient placement of handwashing stations, or, in some cases, the complete lack of handwashing stations, is a substantial hindrance to the uptake of optimal handwashing practices at the household level. In response, SPRING/Bangladesh has introduced household "tippy taps." A tippy tap is a simple water-saving handwashing device that increases the availability of water for handwashing at significant points around the household. All trainees and FNS members are taught and encouraged to build and use at least two household tippy taps beside toilets and kitchens to improve the adoption of improved hygiene practices. Repeated exposure to pathogens significantly increases a child's risk of contracting illnesses, such as diarrheal diseases, which can result in stunting and other health complications.

