

# Supportive Husbands, Healthy Families

## Spouses Team Up to Improve Nutrition in Bangladesh

By SPRING/Bangladesh



Photo credit: SPRING/Bangladesh

Mehdi Hasan Sattar helps his wife in the homestead garden, where the family grows nutritious vegetables.

**“What’s great about [FNS] is that we can have nutritious food without spending any money.”**

--Mehdi Hasan Sattar,  
a supportive husband and father

### Embracing New Opportunities

When Mehdi Hasan Sattar, a resident of Khulna’s Rupsha upazila, first heard that his wife had enrolled in a USAID-funded farmer nutrition school (FNS), he was skeptical.

“My immediate thought was to not allow her to go. I did not know anyone from there and she normally stays at home. However, when I discovered there was an opportunity to learn new things, like techniques to improve vegetable gardening, I changed my mind,” Mehdi said.

Since then, Mehdi has gone from being a skeptic to an advocate of the FNS, which is administered by the Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project. Now he assists his wife with FNS activities, especially the more physically demanding ones, whenever he can. Thanks to FNS training and SPRING’s support, his family can continue to consume nutritious foods even when he is away from home.

“What’s great about [FNS] is that we can have nutritious food without spending any money. We often feed eggs to our baby in the morning. [FNS] has had a great impact on our lives,” Mehdi added.

### Learning New Techniques

Mohammad Monirul Islam, also from Khulna, echoed Mehdi’s sentiments. When his wife was pregnant and enrolled in the FNS, he helped prepare the garden bed to grow vegetables. His wife also told him about the benefits of tippy taps and improved hatching pots for chickens, or “hajol.” He had never seen them before, and finds

their improved design fascinating, especially the two pits at the front of the pot for food and water. Mehdi and Mohammad's stories are not unique; many husbands across SPRING/Bangladesh's working areas have shared stories of supporting their wives' efforts and their excitement about better nutrition.

Jewel Islam of Abhaynagar is another enthusiastic husband. A new father, he supported his wife during her pregnancy and now helps her with nutrition-based homestead gardening. Jewel takes care of the baby while his wife undertakes FNS activities and other household chores.

### Growing Enthusiasm

The increasing involvement of husbands is an encouraging trend SPRING staff members have noticed across SPRING's working areas. Husbands' initial skepticism shifts quickly to interest and eagerness. The active participation of husbands provides much-needed support to FNS students, helping them thrive in the training sessions and after they graduate. This kind of support not only empowers women, but also puts nutrition and family health at the center of household conversations, ensuring that all family members focus on this important issue.

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More than 126,000 women have benefited from 6,421 SPRING-implemented farmer nutrition schools across 40 *upazilas* in Barisal and Khulna since May 2012. SPRING/Bangladesh facilitates social and behavior change to prevent stunting in young children by focusing on nutrition during the critical "1,000 days" from conception through the first two years of life.

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#### **SPRING**

JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.  
1616 Fort Myer Drive, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Arlington, VA 22209, USA  
Phone: 703-528-7474  
Fax: 703-528-7480  
Email: [info@spring\\_nutrition.org](mailto:info@spring_nutrition.org)  
Internet: [www.spring-nutrition.org](http://www.spring-nutrition.org)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/bdspring](http://www.facebook.com/bdspring)



Photo credit: SPRING/Bangladesh

Jewel Islam takes care of the baby while his wife is occupied with FNS-related activities.



Photo credit: SPRING/Bangladesh

Mohammad Monirul Islam has been assisting his wife with gardening activities for the last few years.