



NUTRITION AT THE CENTER

National Scale Up for Impact: Strengthening the Multi-Sectoral Approach to Nutrition

OVERVIEW Nutrition at the Center (N@C) is an innovative five-year (2013-2017) intervention designed to develop, document, and disseminate highly effective and efficient integrated approaches that substantially and sustainably improve nutritional outcomes for mothers and children. In Bangladesh, N@C aims to reduce anemia in women (age 15-49 years) and stunting and anemia in children (age 0-35 months) by integrating maternal, infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN); water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); food security; and women's empowerment. In Bangladesh, N@C is being implemented in 394 villages of Bishwambarpur and Derai sub-districts of the Sunamganj district.

Background

Improvements in the areas of social justice; food security; health and nutrition services; and women and girl's empowerment are *all* vital for significant and sustainable nutritional change in Bangladesh. Thus, improving the country's nutritional status requires many different actors and sectors to collaborate on the implementation and support of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific initiatives.

In 2015, an Upazila Nutrition Coordinating Committee (UNCC) was established for each of the two target sub-districts to lead the program's multi-sectoral collaboration initiatives to plan and execute their collective vision for reduction in malnutrition. In this role, UNCCs led key actors from the health, agriculture, and education sectors to improve service delivery and provide monitoring support across project areas both for nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific interventions. Members of the UNCC include representatives from the Community Support Groups (CSGs), local NGOs/CSOs, CARE Bangladesh, the Union Parishad (UP), and 13 nutrition-sensitive departments of the Government of Bangladesh.

OBJECTIVES

1. Sensitize government departments, community-based NGOs and CSOs, local governments, and N@C to increase responsive capacity to nutrition issues within the community;
2. Expand collaboration among actors to strengthen nutrition-promoting activities; and
3. Demonstrate good practice to encourage replication of the N@C model in ongoing and upcoming national programs.

Timeline of N@C's Multi-Sectoral Approach and Activities

2014

- Decision made to establish sub-district level platform
- 1-on-1 discussions with sub-district level officials including UP chairman and representatives from the offices of health and family planning and nutrition

2015

- UNCCs formed in both sub-districts
- UNCC operational guidelines drafted and reviewed
- Observed World Breastfeeding Week with UNCC leadership
- Discussed school-based nutrition interventions with district education

2016

- Launched school-based IFA distribution
- Finalized UNCC operational guidelines
- Observation of N@C field activities
- Agriculture and Livestock Office increased technical support to NGOs
- Increased women's representation in CSGs and other platforms

2017

- UP responsive to UNCC decisions; reflected in new budget
- Visit from Institute of Public Health and Nutrition Director
- Decision taken to develop annual nutrition plan for sub-district level
- UNCC proposed in Second National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN2) 2016-2025

Highlights of UNCC Activities and Achievements

The UNCC is the key vehicle at the sub-district level through which N@C strengthens multi-sectoral engagement. In Deraï and Bishwambarpur, UNCCs led key actors from the health, agriculture, and education sectors to improve service delivery and provide monitoring support across project areas; including:

MULTI-SECTORAL COLLABORATION AND OPERATIONS

- Nutrition was given priority consideration in budget planning, particularly for the UP and departments related to agriculture, livestock, and education resulting in a 23% increase of the UP budget allocation for health, nutrition, and a 19% increase for agriculture.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 37,523 poor & extreme poor community members have been linked with safety net programs such as Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), Fair price, maternity benefits, Food for Work, Money for Work, and WASH
- 219 CSG members joined the UP standing committee;
- CSGs and other GO/NGO development workers have referred 223 children identified during household visits as having severe or moderately acute malnutrition to local health clinics;
- 3,000 community members received technical training on homestead vegetable production from the sub-assistant agriculture officer.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

- Approximately 5,000 girls received IFA tablets through distribution at 24 secondary schools; and
- Demonstration vegetable gardens were established at 42 community clinics and 24 schools with technical support from the agricultural department.

WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

- 606 sanitary latrines installed by the local governments, with one village achieving 100% sanitary latrine coverage;
- 356 tube wells installed; and
- Handwashing stations installed at 24 secondary schools.

WOMEN AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT

- 22 of 24 Nutrition Focal Point Persons—those responsible for overseeing and coordinating their school's health and nutrition activities—are women;
- Almost half of the CSG members that joined the UP Standing Committee are women;
- Both sub-districts were declared free of early marriage (marriage before the age of 18 years); and
- *Khas* land (land owned and allocated by the government) was provided to three extremely poor women.

National Scale Up for Impact

As a direct result of N@C's successful pilot of the multi-sector nutrition program and advocacy for national scale up, the UNCC platform has been adopted by the Government of Bangladesh as part of the country's Second National Action Plan for Nutrition (2016—2025); and according to this plan, the UNCC model will be scaled up to lead multi-sectoral nutrition initiatives across the country.

N@C's model will be scaled up across 491 sub districts, consisting of 4,500 Unions, reaching a total population of approximately 160 million.

Key Recommendations for Continued Success

- Encourage and support increased women and minority participation in CSGs, CSOs, UNCCs, and other platforms that drive multi-sectoral collaboration;
- Set targets and measure progress regularly; take corrective measures if necessary;
- Share learnings and knowledge produced with partners and other stakeholders; and
- Invite national stakeholders to learn about the initiative's design, execution, results, and lessons learned in order to inform future program development and nutrition advocacy activities.

CARE USA

Jennifer Orgle
T: 404.979.4130
jorgle@care.org

CARE Bangladesh

Nazneen Rahman
nazneen.rahman@care.org

