



DIETARY DIVERSIFICATION IN BANGLADESH

NATIONAL NUTRITION OVERVIEW

- Despite great progress over the last **20** years, poor nutrition is still hurting Bangladesh, its children and its future
- Poor nutrition impacts on economic outcomes, on health, on education; improving nutrition can bring about positive change in the short and long term and is essential to Bangladesh's Vision **21**
- There are smart nutrition interventions, packages and policies, and the **7** research papers provide Bangladeshi contextualized analyses
- Bangladesh can own the problem and its solutions. Bangladesh can exercise control over its own budgets and policy priorities, and draw on international agendas
- Existing nutrition strategies need to spend the budget allocated, and more needs to be spent across all of government
- Substantive progress on nutrition policy can be made with strong leadership and coordination across government departments

DIETARY DIVERSIFICATION OVERVIEW

- Animal sourced foods such as meat, milk, eggs, cheese, still make up a relatively small proportion of an average Bangladeshi family diet, compared with grains and cereals. Yet such dietary diversity can be critical to good nutrition, adding essential nutrients and improving health and productivity.

Dietary diversification is important in improving micronutrient nutrition in Bangladesh. Cereals, largely rice, are the main food in Bangladesh with nearly two-thirds of the daily diet consisting of rice, some vegetables, a small amount of pulses and minimal quantities of protein. Milk, milk products and meat are consumed only occasionally and in very small amounts. As a result, traditional eating

habits often do not translate into a balanced nutritious diet.

With **54.8** percent of total household consumption expenditure allocated to food in Bangladesh, the production of animal-source foods (ASFs) can provide a viable means of both increasing the income of households while also improving nutrition. The benefits of consuming ASFs are numerous. ASFs are energy dense contain high-quality protein, and are good sources of micronutrients like vitamin A, iron and zinc.

While the importance of ASFs has increased over time, meat/poultry and eggs contribute only **34** calories out of the daily per capita calorie consumption of **2318Kcal**. Milk and dairy products contributed about 27 calories, representing less than **3** percent of calorie consumption. Given that more than **50** percent of households in Bangladesh are already involved in the production of ASFs, it should be possible to increase the proportion of households involved in ASF production as well as increasing the intensity of production per household.

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON DIETARY DIVERSIFICATION

HOME LIVESTOCK: COSTS AND BENEFITS OF ENHANCING RURAL DIETS BY IMPROVING HOMESTEAD FOOD PRODUCTION OF ANIMAL SOURCE FOODS

- The main benefit of raising livestock at home is increased household income
- Increased income reduces the stunting of children and increases their potential earnings when they grow up and enter the labor market
- Each Taka spent would generate a result to society of **3** Taka¹.

Research by Mahmud Khan on the costs and benefits of enhancing rural diets by improving homestead food production of animal-source-foods

¹ This benefit-cost ratio uses a 3% discount rate



shows numerous benefits in terms of nutritional and income improvements. The production of ASFs results in improvements in food diversity and food consumption while also helping to increase the real income of households. There is a future increase in income. This is coupled with improvements in food diversity and food consumption, and a rise in the nutritional status of children and mothers. These benefits also result in better access to health and other services. Consequently, these improvements help to lower stunting along with child and maternal mortality. This creates life years saved and improves income earning potential.

**COMPLEMENTARY FEEDING PROMOTION:
COSTS AND BENEFITS OF PROMOTING
COMPLEMENTARY AND SUPPLEMENTARY
FEEDING AMONG WOMEN AND CHILDREN
FROM THE SOCIETAL PERSPECTIVE**

- Promoting dietary diversification through nutrient dense foods, both in quality and quantity, will lead to better nutritional status of women and children
- Each Taka spent would generate a result to society of **14.5** Taka.
- Research by Mahmud Khan and Rubina Shaheen into complementary and supplementary feeding promotion among women and children in Bangladesh shows that consumption of nutrient dense food by pregnant women, lactating mothers and infants results in a number of direct nutritional improvements. Supplementary foods are intended to provide nutrients that would otherwise not be consumed in sufficient quantities. These foods are high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, fatty acids and amino acids. Complementary feeding refers to the transition from exclusive breastfeeding to the introduction of family foods. This typically covers the period from **6-24** months of age. Some of the nutritional benefits as a result of supplementary and complementary feeding promotion include:

- Improved nutritional status of women (improved BMI and other measures of nutritional status)
- Lower morbidity of women
- Improved labor productivity
- Improved caring practice
- Higher birth weight of babies
- Lower stillbirths

A number of indirect benefits can be attributed to improvements in nutrition for pregnant women. These include medical care savings; years of life saved, lower disability, and increased income.

OBSTACLES

Sufficient budgetary attention to nutrition remains an obstacle in Bangladesh. According to a recent study by Hawlader et al, providing effective nutrition services at scale for Bangladesh would cost **90-120** billion for the period 2011-2021 (**9-12** billion Taka per year), resulting in a net benefit in terms of increased economic productivity that would exceed **700** billion Taka by 2021. In 2012-2013, the government spent **3.49** billion Taka on child nutrition – well short of the **9-12** billion Taka proposed in the Hawlader study.

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