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FACT SHEET

Nutrition: Improved dietary diversity and consumption

Aquaculture: Increasing income, diversifying diets, and empowering women in Bangladesh



Introduction

In recent years, fish polyculture systems in Bangladesh have demonstrated that animal protein and key micronutrient can be produced on a massive scale with minimal environmental impact.

WorldFish is supporting the sustainable growth of this important aquatic food system to provide a source of nutritious, safe food for a growing population, providing important nutritional and health benefits to both women of reproductive age and young children. In partnership with NGOs and private sector actors, this project is providing science-based solutions to farmers, service providers, and market traders, increasing productivity and income throughout the system.

This project is focused on Rangpur and Rajshahi Divisions in north-west Bangladesh, where malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies among women and children are well documented. Inadequate intake of vitamins and minerals by both women of reproductive age and young children contributes to stunting, which can result in a lifetime of cognitive impairment, reduced productivity and lower earning potential.

Project goals

The major nutritional goal of this project is to increase the consumption of nutrient-rich foods, including fish and fish-based products, by the end of 2022, for women and young children in smallholder households; as well as for rural and urban, non-fish farming households and consumers in Rajshahi and Rangpur Divisions. This is being achieved by:

- Increased pond production and improved local market linkages to make available affordable, nutrient-rich safe and value-added fish products.
- Enhanced knowledge, skills and awareness among all stakeholders on the importance of increased fish consumption for improved nutrition, especially in women of reproductive age and young children using digital messaging.



Donor

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Partners

Local and national governments, nongovernmental organizations and private sector partners, including local service providers

Duration

November 2018 to December 2022

- Partnering with NGOs to provide social behavior change communication and nutrition messaging regarding better dietary diversity, including fish intake to increase the market demand for fish.
- Improved nutrition through increased consumption of fish from homestead ponds.

Background

In Rajshahi and Rangpur Divisions (home to 34 million people, 24% of the country's population) poverty and malnutrition remain high, particularly among women and children. However, these divisions enjoy agro-ecological conditions that have untapped potential for improved fish productivity. There are significant opportunities to improve the productivity and diversity of fish production systems, scale up nutrition-sensitive aquaculture approaches and encourage the participation of women in many segments of the fish value chains.

To avoid a gap between demand and supply of nutritious food, fish polyculture in this region needs to increase its productivity. Sustainable growth of this food system will have positive impacts on income, nutrition and women's empowerment.

Project components

The project involves a range of activities and interventions to improve dietary diversity and consumption, both directly and indirectly, including:

- Developing tailored technical and business solutions by leveraging WF's expertise in fish polyculture.
- Increasing the reach of the project's nutrition sensitive solutions by taking advantage of NGOs local expertise in promoting behavioral change to women and children.
- Proactively searching for economic opportunities for women within the food system and supporting specific groups of women in taking advantage of these opportunities.
- Involving a diverse set of local private service providers and private sector companies to deliver solutions to smallholder aquaculture farmers, fish traders and consumers.
- Using digital approaches and virtual networks to enhance the impact of the solutions being delivered by the project throughout the value chain.

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