



Sustainable Agriculture and Production Linked to Improved Nutrition Status, Resilience, and Gender Equity



Overview

The Sustainable Agriculture and Production Linked to Improved Nutrition Status, Resilience, and Gender Equity (SAPLING) program, is a six-year USAID-funded Resilience Food Security Activity.

SAPLING, which is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MOCHTA), has worked with over 57,000 households across five sub-districts (upazilas) in Bandarban District of the remote Chittagong Hill Tracts region of Bangladesh to apply a multi-sectoral integrated approach to improve gender-equitable food security, nutrition, and resilience. SAPLING collaborates with communities, traditional leaders and other key stakeholders across program components and links to and capacitates private sector and public systems to build an environment in which families have agency and confidence to put knowledge and skills into practice for more resilient livelihoods and communities.

Improved household production and dietary diversity

From 2015, SAPLING has built the skills of 49,226 individuals, 98% of whom were women. They were trained on improved, climate-smart agricultural techniques to produce nutritious foods at home, including vegetables, fruits, chickens, and fish.

Working closely with local market actors, SAPLING linked these home garden producers to market outlets to have access to income from surplus production and trained them on value chain activities.



Knowledge of improved household food production

2017 2021

53%

95%

Usage of improved agriculture technologies

2021

96%

Minimum acceptable diet in women

2017 2021

60%

95%

Farmers practicing value chain activities

Baseline 2021

76%

96%

Access to markets

2017 2021

32%

76%



Changes in healthcare

Since October 2018, SAPLING Community Health Service Workers (CHSWs), recruited from the communities where they live and speak the local language, have been an effective outreach mechanism to support increased health-seeking behavior.

From the baseline in 2016 to the annual survey at the end of fiscal year 2020, handwashing at five critical times with soap increased from 4% to 33% and exclusive breastfeeding increased from 44% to 86%. From fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2020, early initiation of breastfeeding increased from 37% to 83%. Children consuming animal source food increased from 73% to 96% from 2017 to 2020.

Services in fiscal year 2020	Beneficiaries
Malnutrition screening for children under 2 years	4,842
Vitamin A for children	12,476
Four antenatal visits for pregnant women	2,192 (from 0 in 2017)
Caregivers trained on appropriate nutrition and healthcare for children under 5 years of age	11,446
Health professionals trained on essential nutrition and hygiene	2,000
Mobile antenatal clinics established with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	21



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Disaster response and WASH

SAPLING and local government and traditional leaders revitalized 5 Upazila, 2 Pourashova, 24 Union disaster management committees and 99 ward-level Community Disaster Response Teams and trained them on:

- The Disaster Management Act
- Standing Orders on Disaster
- Community Risk Assessment
- Advocating for representation of minority ethnic groups and women

2,500 first responder volunteers trained to provide emergency services to communities in collaboration with the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and Bangladesh Fire Service & Civil Defense.

SAPLING households implementing at least two risk reduction actions:



15 DPHE mechanics trained with the Department of Public Health and Engineering to provide operation and maintenance services for water and sanitation infrastructure. This helped expand businesses of private sector suppliers, bringing services and products to the areas that most need them.

SAPLING and DPHE's work under the GoB's Pro-Poor Strategy on water and sanitation included:

- Strengthened WATSAN committees
- Establishment of **124 community-level Water User Committees**
- Repaired or installed **29 water supply systems in 23 villages (para)**
- Villages (paras) met their co-finance requirement to be eligible for water infrastructure support
- **100 WUCs started collecting water user fees**, raising funds for future operations and maintenance of the water supply systems managed by them

The successful collaboration of MOCHTA and the USAID-funded SAPLING, as well as other ministries, NGOs, and private sector, is improving the livelihoods of over 57,000 households in Bandarban, allowing families to dream big and plan for their future.