

It's not enough to talk about it: Increasing women's nutrition outcomes through simultaneous, multiple interventions

Feed the Future Bangladesh Livestock Production for Improved Nutrition Project

INTRODUCTION

In rural Bangladesh, food insecurity and malnutrition are severe. Improved livestock productivity could increase incomes and access to nutritious foods, especially for women. Gender norms, however, often prevent women from fully engaging in livestock production. Additionally, while low-cost messaging options are often employed, research suggests it improves knowledge but not behavior. This study evaluates Feed the Future Bangladesh Livestock Production for Improved Nutrition (LPIN) project activities, which include initial and reinforced low-cost messaging and training, animal health and nutrition camps, and male engagement through partnerships with local religious leaders. The project's goal is to increase the use and production of livestock products in rural Bangladesh to improve rural household nutrition. Relying on data gathered from a baseline and annual survey, this research indicates a relationship between multiple communication-related interventions and an increased uptake of agricultural technology, women's decision-making power concerning agriculture and finances, and increased consumption of meat and dairy. Researchers and practitioners looking to improve women's nutrition outcomes should consider including multiple layers of information, activities, and engagement in their projects.

METHODOLOGY

This review relies on findings from the 2018 Feed the Future Bangladesh LPIN Midterm Outcome Report. The review includes quantitative data collected from a baseline study and annual surveys conducted in 2017 and 2018 in addition to qualitative data from focus group discussions and key interviews with 41 stakeholders in the Jashore, Satkhira, and Khulna districts.

Figure 1: Midterm Outcome Report Study Districts



Source: Google Maps

PRODUCTION AND NUTRITION OUTCOMES

Between the baseline study and annual surveys, household meat and dairy production increased. Men, however, saw a greater increase in their dairy production, whereas women saw a greater increase in meat production. Further research found gendered differences in technology uptake that may explain production variances between men and women (see Table 1).

Table 1: Rate of uptake of technology by LPIN farmers, 2017-2018

Type of technology	Rate of technology application by farmers	
	Women	Men
Vaccination	43%	48%
Deworming	78%	85%*
Artificial insemination	39%	47%*
Improved fodder	12%	20%**
Ready feed	8%	6%
Separate manger	46%	54%*
Overall uptake (at least one technology/practices applied)	88%	94%

Source: Midterm Outcome Report

The consumption of meat and dairy is also encouraged by the project, especially for women and children. Targeted messages and nutrition-based training were provided to men and women. Additionally, local religious leaders stressed to men the importance of meat and dairy for women's nutrition needs.



Research found overall consumption by men, women, and children have increased. Men and women reported equal levels of consumption, with children consuming more than both men and women.

Table 2: Household Consumption, 2017-2018

Consume regularly	Men	Women	Children
Meat	58%	58%	66%
Milk	59%	59%	74%
Dairy Product	28%	28%	30%

Source: Midterm Outcome Report

GENDER AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

In addition to production and nutrition outcomes, LPIN's Midterm Outcome Report assessed women's control over household decision-making and income. The report also examined women in leadership roles, particularly as livestock service providers.



Women who say they make decisions about livestock rearing, input purchases, and selling milk and livestock exceeded all projected targets for 2018. While 14 percent of women reported making household spending decisions in 2018, up from nine percent at the project's start, this is actually a 26 percent decrease from 2017.

Table 3: Women's Input Into Income, Over Time

	Baseline	2017	2018	2018 target
Percentage of females reporting that they can provide input into decisions about the use of income	9%	19%	14%	12%

Source: Midterm Outcome Report

A higher percentage of women and men agreed they would receive services from a female LSP, albeit more women agreed with this statement than men. LSPs also reported female farmers were communicating with them more often and with better results.

CONCLUSION

Overall improvements in livestock production, household nutrition, and women's empowerment were captured through data collection. Despite this, gendered differences remain. Project goals that were supported by multiple interventions, most notably those concerning household nutrition, appear to have more equitable gender-based results.