

## COUNTRY PROFILE ON NUTRITION 01/2021

# BANGLADESH



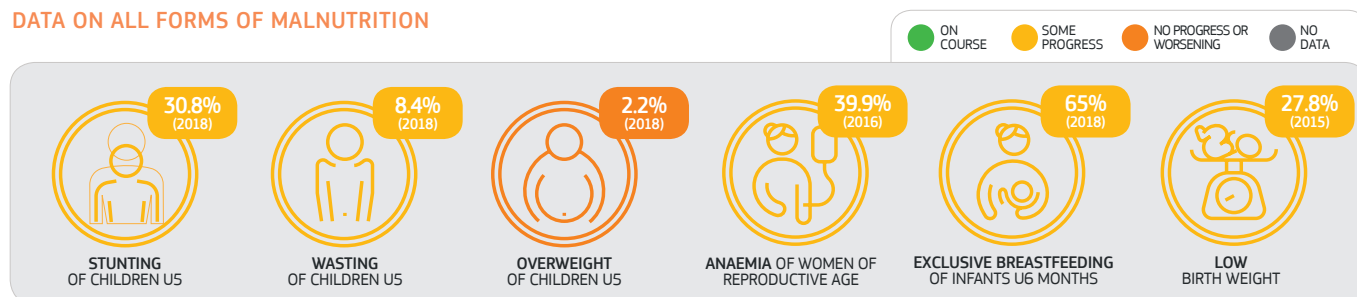
### Nutrition situation in Bangladesh

#### AT A GLANCE

The population of Bangladesh is currently estimated at around 164.7 million<sup>1</sup>, with around 40% located in urban areas. Gender equality has improved in Bangladesh but inequalities persist e.g. in education and employment. The country has made some progress to meet several global nutrition targets, although prevalence of low birth weight, stunting in children under 5 and anaemia in women of reproductive age remain high. One in 12 of the children suffer from wasting, a form of undernutrition associated with weakened immunity and increased risk of death. Undernutrition disproportionately affects the poor, due

to socio-economic inequalities and a generally low-quality diet. It undermines a child's physical and cognitive development and so has lifelong consequences including a greater risk of chronic diseases later in life. While 40% of adult women are anaemic, the national prevalence of overweight and obesity continues to rise. The economic cost of undernutrition alone is estimated to exceed USD 1 billion per year in Bangladesh. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this situation. Bangladesh has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.537 and is ranked at 133 out of 162 countries in the 2019 index.

#### DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



#### NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

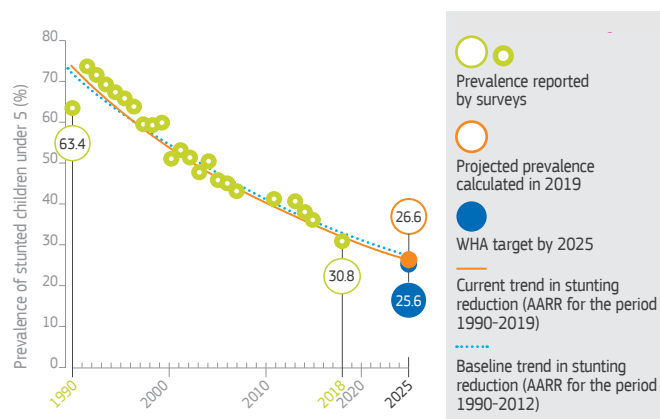
- Bangladesh joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in 2012.
- The government's second national plan of action for nutrition (NPAN2 2016-2025) outlines the framework for its 2015 national nutrition policy. With priority interventions costed at USD 1.6 billion, NPAN2 has been endorsed by the Executive Committee of the revitalised Bangladesh national nutrition council (chaired by the Prime Minister). Nutrition focal points have been identified in 22 nutrition relevant ministries and government agencies. NPAN2 provides a dedicated common results framework for monitoring and evaluation led by an interagency platform within the nutrition council secretariat.
- Annual sectoral workplans with activities and a budget for 22 ministries are in place and the nutrition council is establishing a central mechanism to track the budgets for each line ministry against their workplan. The establishment of decentralised multisectoral nutrition committees (Upazila nutrition coordination committees and district nutrition coordination councils) is contributing towards progress on sub-national coordination.
- In 2013, the government mandated the fortification of edible oil with vitamin A.
- Since 2017, the government has provided fortified rice to 81 sub-districts to address micronutrient deficiencies, through various social safety net mechanisms and plans to scale up to 100 sub-districts by the end of 2020.

#### Example of EU support

Suchana is a EUR 53.8 million programme (of which 25% is for nutrition) whose aim is to significantly reduce the incidence of stunting in children under two in two districts of Sylhet Division (which has the highest stunting and wasting prevalence in Bangladesh). Jointly supported by the EU and UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and implemented by a consortium of NGOs led by Save the Children, the programme focuses on tackling undernutrition within the critical first 1,000 days of life. It takes a multisectoral approach and works closely with seven ministries to strengthen delivery systems and improve people's access to key nutrition-related services. Adults are supported with income-generating activities, homestead gardening and health and nutrition awareness. To enable people to cope with climatic, health and economic shocks, one of the programme's key components focuses on increasing access to social protection schemes, including maternity allowance<sup>2</sup>. Suchana is also harnessing evidence to catalyse support for a multisectoral approach to improve nutrition governance across the country.

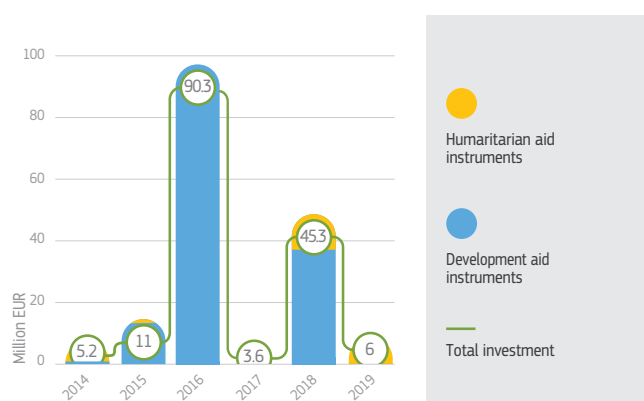
## Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition

### TREND, PROJECTION AND TARGETS IN THE PREVALENCE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN (U5) STUNTED



The Government of Bangladesh has committed, through the national plan of action for nutrition, to reduce stunting to 25% by 2025. Bangladesh has experienced a steady decline in the prevalence of stunting since the 1990s and the number of stunted children has halved. The country is currently projected to come close to meeting both the government's own target and the World Health Assembly's (WHA) target by 2025. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted accelerated marginally from 2.75% in 2012 to 2.85% in 2019. If this trend is maintained, then 3.67 million children are expected to be stunted in 2025. This is slightly over the WHA target of 3.53 million.

### EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019 – A TOTAL OF EUR 161.4 MILLION



EU nutrition commitments from 2014 to 2019 include the provision of EUR 23.3 million in humanitarian assistance for nutrition. The Food and Nutrition Security Programme for Bangladesh (2015 and 2016) represents the largest single nutrition investment at EUR 85 million. This programme has three components: MUCH, a national policy framework initiative; Suchana, a multi-sectoral project to reduce stunting in two districts of Sylhet Division (described above); and a programme of 5 projects to strengthen nutrition governance at local level, implemented by NGO-led consortia. In 2018, the EU allocated EUR 130 million to support the government's national social security strategy with a focus on systemic improvements and child benefit components (estimated EUR 33 million allocated for nutrition). The programme is being reoriented in the short term to address the COVID-19 pandemic's socio-economic impact on garment workers in the ready-made industry.

<sup>1</sup> World Population Prospects <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

<sup>2</sup> The EU also supports the Government of Bangladesh (via budget support) to scale up national coverage of maternity allowance and child benefit.