



**Global Food Security Strategy  
(GFSS)  
Bangladesh Country Plan**

**May 31, 2018**

## Table of Contents

<b>Acronyms</b> .....	3
<b>Background</b> .....	4
<b>1. Food Security and Nutrition Context in Bangladesh</b> .....	4
Country-Specific Drivers of Poverty, Hunger and Malnutrition.....	6
Donor Landscape .....	7
<b>2. Targeting</b> .....	8
<b>3. Program Components</b> .....	12
3.1. Agricultural Productivity and Diversity .....	12
3.2. Strengthened Market Systems.....	13
3.3. Food Safety and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards .....	14
3.4. Enhanced Business Enabling Environment and Entrepreneurship .....	15
3.5. Resilience .....	15
3.6. Increased Employment and Livelihoods .....	17
3.7. Improved Climate Risk Management .....	17
3.8. Nutrition .....	18
3.9. Optimizing Economic Inclusion .....	20
3.10. Advancing Country Leadership Through Policy Systems .....	21
3.11. Agricultural Research Coordination .....	23
<b>4. Stakeholder Engagement Platforms</b> .....	23

## Acronyms

ADS	Agricultural Development Strategy
BCC	Behavior Change and Communication
CDCS	Country Development and Cooperation Strategy
CFUGs	Community Forest User Groups
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFSS	Global Food Security Strategy
GON	Government of Bangladesh
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IR	Intermediate Result
JNSC	Joint National Steering Committee
JSR	Joint Sector Review
MoALMC	Ministry of Agriculture, Land Management and Cooperatives
MOH	Ministry of Health
MSNP	Multi Sector Nutrition Plan
NPC	National Planning Commission
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
SUN	Scaling up Nutrition
TIFA	Trade and Investment Framework Agreement
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
ZOI	Zone of Influence

## Background

The Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Country Plan for Bangladesh was co-written by the United States Government (USG) interagency involved in food security and nutrition work through the Feed the Future initiative after extensive consultation with stakeholders from government ministries, private companies, universities, research institutes, international and local NGOs, donors and international organizations and was given extensive review and commentary by USG interagency partners in Washington, DC. As a living document, it is intended to be updated as needed in consultation with those parties over time.

The GFSS Country Plan serves as an overarching framework for integrated food security and nutrition programming. The plan is intended to describe the key drivers of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty. These key drivers stem from a complex set of underlying conditions that exist at the individual, household, community and system level. At the design and procurement stages, the targeting, results framework and program components will require further refinement to operationalize integrated and holistic approaches. Interventions at all levels will need to complement each other to sustainably tackle food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty. In particular, the most vulnerable and poor populations do not have sufficient assets, skills, and capabilities to participate in market operations. These populations will need to be supported to develop capacity over time to participate in value chains so that they can become a viable livelihood option. As GFSS programming is refined through the design, procurement and implementation processes, selected value chains will explicitly prioritize inclusive growth and interventions will enable the most vulnerable and poor populations to graduate into selected value chains and benefit from the GFSS-supported livelihoods and market development efforts.

Budget assumptions for interagency contributions to this plan reflect the FY 2017 Estimate and FY 2018 President's Budget, based on information publicly available at the time this document was prepared. Out year budget assumptions reflect a straight-line to the FY 2018 President's Budget. Any funding beyond FY 2017 is subject to the availability of funds, as determined by the President's Budget and a Congressional appropriation. Budget assumptions may require revision in the future, based on future President's Budgets.

### 1. Food Security and Nutrition Context in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's independence in 1971, and the attendant war-induced famine, shaped many of Bangladesh's food security decisions. Since that time, the country has forged a strong economy and dramatically improved living standards. Major investments in agricultural technology and policy, poverty-based lending and finance, and a range of other sound decisions have had significant positive food security impacts.

Following 10 years of sustained gross domestic product (GDP) growth of over six percent annually, Bangladesh crossed the lower-middle income threshold for the first time in July 2015.<sup>1</sup> The proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 per day fell from 31.5 to 24.3 percent from 2010 to 2016.<sup>2</sup> From 2011-2016,

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<sup>1</sup> "Country Partnership Strategy, Bangladesh 2016-2020." Asian Development Bank, September 2016, 2. <http://bit.ly/2ig7bW0>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/10/24/bangladesh-continues-to-reduce-poverty-but-at-slower-pace> (US \$1.90 Purchasing Power Parity)

per capita nominal annual income increased from \$835.79 to \$1,358.78.<sup>3</sup> Bangladesh has also made significant progress in reducing malnutrition over the last two decades. The prevalence of stunting (low height-for-age) among children under five decreased from 55 percent in 1997 to 36 percent in 2014.<sup>4</sup> Maternal undernutrition, as measured by “low” body mass index (BMI), also declined significantly, from 52 percent in 1997 to 17 percent in 2014.<sup>5</sup>

Even though recent economic growth has elevated overall GDP, Bangladesh ranks 142 out of 188 countries in the 2015 Human Development Report.<sup>6</sup> Stunting affects over a third of children and its long term impacts on cognition and economic potential remain a major challenge for Bangladesh. Approximately 24 percent, or 38 million people, have not fully benefited from the development gains to date and remain below the poverty line.<sup>7</sup> Ensuring equitable distribution of social and economic development gains among the population will be a predominant development challenge as Bangladesh seeks to become a middle-income country by 2021.

The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) recognizes these challenges and has described its commitment and support for the goals of improved food security and nutrition in a number of ways:

- Commitment to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In November 2015, the Prime Minister established the Inter-Ministerial SDG Implementation and Monitoring Committee under the authority of the Principal Secretary in the Prime Minister’s Office.
- Commitment to a broad strategy entitled “Accelerating Growth, Empowering Citizens,” in its 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Social and Economic Development Plan for 2016-2020. The Plan’s overarching goal is to achieve faster, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable growth centering around three broad themes: 1) Supporting GDP growth acceleration, employment generation, and rapid poverty reduction; 2) Encouraging broad based strategy of inclusiveness with a view to empowering every citizen to participate fully and benefit from the development process; and 3) Forwarding a sustainable development pathway that is resilient to disaster and climate change.
- Commitment to sustainable, diversified, climate-smart agriculture through integrated education, research, and extension. The GOB has prioritized diversification of high value, high nutritive value crops. The GOB has emphasized (a) developing high yielding varieties of major crops, (b) training extension agents, and (c) training farmers on sustainable farming practices. Further, seed production activities through biotechnology will be expanded. The themes of the 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan align with the guiding principles of the GFSS of reducing poverty through employment generation and supporting inclusiveness by empowering the Bangladesh citizenry.
- Commitment to implementing the National Nutrition Policy (NNP) to improve the nutritional status of all Bangladeshis, with special attention to children, mothers, adolescent girls, and the critical 1,000-day window of pregnancy and the first two years of life.<sup>8</sup> Consistent with this policy, the GOB developed a Second National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN2), which calls for a multi-

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<sup>3</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators <https://idea.usaid.gov/query>

<sup>4</sup> Osmani, S.R., et al. 2016. Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Bangladesh, World Food Program.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid World Food Program 2016

<sup>6</sup> “Country Partnership Strategy, Bangladesh 2016-2020.” Asian Development Bank, September 2016, 2. <http://bit.ly/2ig7bW0>.

<sup>7</sup> “Country Partnership Strategy, Bangladesh 2016-2020.” Asian Development Bank, September 2016, 2. <http://bit.ly/2ig7bW0>.

<sup>8</sup> National Nutrition Policy. 2015. Government of Bangladesh

sectoral approach to improving nutrition in Bangladesh and will coordinate activities across over 17 GOB ministries, donors, the private sector, and local and international civil society organizations working on nutrition.<sup>9</sup>

### Country-Specific Drivers of Poverty, Hunger and Malnutrition

In light of the current country context, the GOB's priorities, and stakeholder consultations, the U.S. Government has identified the following as the greatest constraints to food security in Bangladesh:

- **Agriculture Productivity and Diversification:** Bangladesh's significant gains in productivity are most notable in crops where the market for seeds and varieties does not fall under government restriction; for example, Bangladesh's maize yields are the highest in Asia. The yields for other crops that fall under GOB policy limitations are lower; for example, Bangladesh's rice yields are 25 percent lower than in Vietnam. Productivity and diversification have been constrained by a lack of good quality seeds, limited varietal choice for key crops, as well as limited market connectivity and access to finance.<sup>10</sup>
- **Business Enabling Environment:** In its Ease of Doing Business Report for 2017, the World Bank reported that Bangladesh has significant weaknesses in the following areas: starting a business; getting electricity; registering property; getting credit; trading across borders; enforcing contracts; and resolving insolvency.<sup>11</sup> These business challenges constrain small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly women and rural entrepreneurs, along the food production and distribution value chain. These challenges limit the growth of a diverse economy with multiple options for income generating activities. Limitations in diversified income generation prevent full and sustained emergence from poverty and have negative long-term health impacts.
- **Nutrition:** The root causes of undernutrition are multifaceted and go beyond the lack of availability and access to diverse, safe and nutritious food. Some drivers of undernutrition include inadequate support for maternal, infant and young child feeding and care; inappropriate knowledge about healthy feeding and care practices; inadequate access to essential health and nutrition services; early marriage and early childbearing; lack of access to safe water and sanitation facilities; and inappropriate hygiene practices, which are influenced by cross-cutting and underlying social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors at the community, national, and global levels.
- **Gender:** Women are critical actors in reducing food insecurity at the system and household levels. In Bangladesh, women face serious challenges due to social and cultural norms that inhibit their ability to fully participate in the economy and must overcome extreme barriers to entirely realizing economic gains. These barriers are manifested through limited mobility, lack of opportunity for leadership positions, and lack of access to finance, market information, agricultural inputs, and extension services. Addressing these barriers is critical in achieving food security.
- **High Levels of Climate and Disaster Vulnerability:** The Climate-Smart Agriculture and Climate Risk Screening assessments done by Feed the Future in 2016 confirm the climate vulnerabilities and

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<sup>9</sup> Second National Plan of Action for Nutrition (Draft). 2017. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh

<sup>10</sup> Rice Output Market Assessment. RDC Activity. 2017

<sup>11</sup> World Bank Doing Business Report 2017

environmental risks within the Feed the Future Zone of Influence (ZOI). Given that most of Bangladesh consists of a flat low-lying river delta, located in a seismically active zone, earthquakes, cyclones, storm surges, floods, rising temperatures, and sea level rise all pose serious risks for agricultural production and safe and reliable access to food.

- **Policy Challenges:** The GOB has effectively implemented a series of policies and programs to promote agricultural growth and food security over the years, and it can build on these successes by developing, revising, and/or implementing policies to:
  - Improve interministerial coordination of investments for the improvement of nutrition;
  - Promote greater diversification (by drafting and implementing the new Seeds Policy that will create more space for private sector development and commercialization of seeds and other inputs, for instance);
  - Improve social protection (by improving the design of social safety nets, for instance).

## Donor Landscape

The USG and other partners have been actively assisting the GOB to achieve common food security and nutrition goals and address the challenges highlighted above. As listed below, a number of donors provide assistance in various areas related to agriculture, women's empowerment, nutrition, and private sector development, including UK Department for International Development (DFID), Swedish International Development Agency Corporation (SIDA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the European Union (EU), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the World Bank (WB). The USG's collaboration with these partners includes, but is not limited to, work with:

- DANIDA on agri-business development and agricultural productivity of female farmers;
- The Dutch Development Corporation on developing private sector provision of fortified food stuffs;
- DFID, JICA and SIDA on addressing entrepreneurial constraints;
- USAID and the EU's co-funding of a capacity strengthening activity in the Ministry of Food to develop and manage nutrition-sensitive interventions;
- DFID's \$29 million investment in USAID's health service delivery activity; and
- The World Bank (WB), ADB, DFID, GIZ and SIDA on climate risk integration into spatial planning, internal migration, climate resilient development and river management.

There are a number of other donor activities that complement Feed the Future's interest in food security and nutrition in Bangladesh. Specifically:

- DFID, the SDC, and DANIDA support agro-business activities with a \$38.2M program for diversified incomes and avoidance of seasonal hunger.
- DANIDA provides significant support to female farmers to improve farm productivity; 50-60 percent of DANIDA's targeted beneficiaries are female farmers.
- The Dutch Development Corporation is working in food security, in particular developing private sector capacity to provide fortified food and government capacity to monitor their efforts.

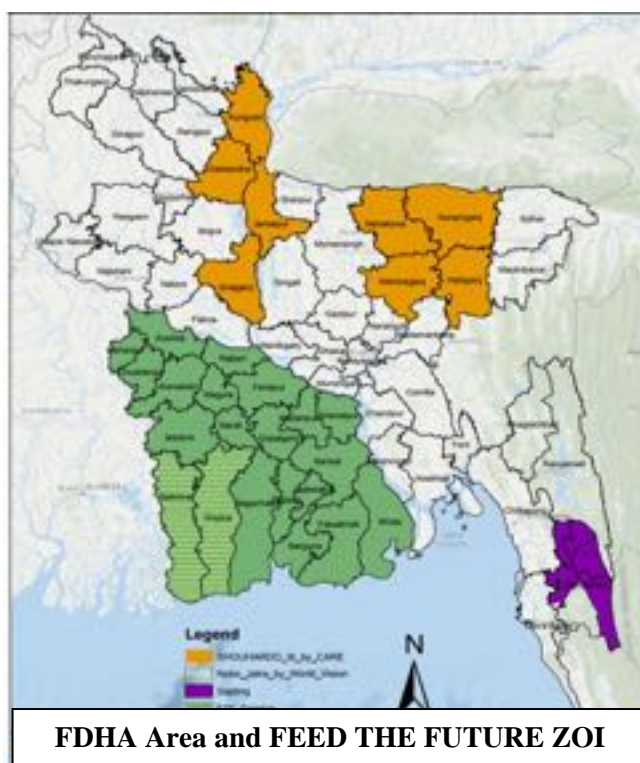
- DFID, SIDA, the EU, ADB, and the World Bank provide assistance for financial sector development and access to finance, particularly for women. These efforts are designed to develop the capacity of the sector as well as assist individuals and SMEs to gain access to finance. For example, DFID is funding a \$118 million, eight-year Business Finance for the Poor program. SIDA is currently designing a loan guarantee program for SMEs, with a possible connected technical assistance program. One component of the EU's INSPIRED project builds the capacity of the financial sector to more effectively design products, manage risk, and provide credit to SMEs.
- The ADB funds a \$300 million Capital Market Development Program and is providing a \$200 million loan to the Bangladesh Bank for SME lending (with \$20 million earmarked for women-owned SMEs).

## 2. Targeting

The USG will predominantly focus GFSS programming in the original Feed the Future Zone of Influence (ZOI), made of up 20 districts in the southwest coastal region of Bangladesh. The original 20 districts are: Barisal, Barguna, Bhola, Jhalokati, Patuakhali, and Pirojpur, which constitute the entire Barisal division; Bagerhat, Chuadanga, Jessore, Jhenaidah, Khulna, Magura, Meherpur, Narail, and Satkhira in the Khulna division; and Gopalganj, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Faridpur and Rajbari in the Dhaka division.

The USG included one additional district, Kushtia, from the Khulna division, in the updated ZOI based on poverty and stunting trends. The Kushtia district has two million inhabitants, with agriculture as the main occupation. Kushtia primarily consists of smallholder farms at 87.17 percent small, 11.90 percent medium, and 0.93 percent large farms. Kushtia is similar, both demographically and geographically, to the rest of ZOI in that there is growth potential for rice production and diversification, and high incidence of poverty and malnutrition. Additionally, low crop intensity and potential for agricultural diversification make Kushtia ideal for agricultural transformation.

The USG's decision to continue its focus on programming in the amended ZOI is based on the population demographics, prevalence of poverty, prevalence of stunting, the status of women and girls, climate risk and vulnerability, and the potential to make progress on the same high-level Feed the Future objectives by building off of the gains that were made under the first phase of the initiative. These factors of the ZOI are described further below:





- **Population Demographics:** The ZOI consists of a predominantly rural, agricultural population. The majority of farms in the ZOI are between 0.5 and 1.49 acres.<sup>12</sup> The total estimated population of the original 20 districts in 2015 was 28,403,114 constituting 6,452,779<sup>13</sup> households. Of these, 7,971,866 are women of reproductive age and 2,585,302 are children aged 0-59 months. With the addition of Kushtia the total estimated population of the ZOI is 30,500,000 (in 2015).
- **Prevalence of Poverty:** Since 2012, Feed the Future has made significant progress toward decreasing poverty rates from 40.5 percent to 34 percent in the ZOI.<sup>14</sup> Depth of poverty has seen a small but statistically significant decrease to 7 percent in 2015, indicating that the poor in this area are getting closer to escaping poverty; daily per capita expenditure has increased.<sup>15</sup> Despite this progress, almost 10.4 million people in the revised ZOI continue to live in poverty.
- **Prevalence of Stunting and Nutrition in the ZOI:** Of all food security indicators in Bangladesh, improvements in food utilization have seen the slowest progress, especially in rural areas. Women's dietary diversity averages 4.52 food groups (4.49 in the ZOI) out of 9 food groups, which reflects a statistically significant increase since 2012, but still requires significant attention. In addition, only 27.3 percent of children 6-23 months receive a minimum acceptable diet.<sup>16</sup> The ZOI saw progress in child health and nutrition, but current rates highlight work that still needs to be done, especially to reduce stunting among children under the age of five, which decreased marginally from 36.9 percent in 2011 to 32.3 percent in 2015.<sup>17</sup> Rates over 30 percent indicate that there remains a high prevalence of stunting, with 835,000 children under five suffering from stunting. Stunting is the result of long-term nutritional deprivation and results in delayed mental development, poor school performance, and reduced economic potential. The prevalence of wasted children under five hovers just over 15 percent in this area,<sup>18</sup> which is recognized as a critical level and indicates acute malnutrition.
- **Women's Empowerment:** The Bangladesh Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) sampled 2,040 households in the ZOI to establish a baseline empowerment score for women and men. In 2011/12, the WEAI baseline score indicated one of the highest levels of women's disempowerment in all Feed the Future countries. About 75 percent of women were not empowered at the baseline in 2011/12, with the primary areas of disempowerment being group membership, speaking in public, and access to and decision on credit.<sup>19</sup> The midterm assessment of WEAI in 2015 found substantial improvement in the empowerment index. Although these are good signs, challenges remain and women continue to be disempowered relative to men.

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<sup>12</sup> Agricultural value chains in the Feed the Future zone of influence in Bangladesh: Baseline study, IFPRI, 2015

<sup>13</sup> Population Numbers for the Feed the Future High Level Impact Indicators in Bangladesh: Changes from 2011 Baseline to 2015 Midline. IFPRI, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Selected Indicators for the Feed the Future Zone of Influence in Bangladesh: Changes from 2011/12 Baseline to 2015 Midline. IFPRI, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> IFPRI, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. IFPRI, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. IFPRI, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. IFPRI, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Selected Indicators for the Feed the Future Zone of Influence in Bangladesh: Changes from 2011/12 Baseline to 2015 Midline. IFPRI, 2016.

- **Youth:** Youth (15-29 years) make up 27.6 percent of the population in the ZOI.<sup>20</sup> Nationally, only 11 percent of household heads of smallholder farms (SHFs) are between 15 and 29 years,<sup>21</sup> but youth are represented across all segments of SHFs, from those farming for sustenance to those engaged in agriculture entrepreneurship in the ZOI. With a rapidly growing population, youth will play a critical role in the development of Bangladesh, particularly in the ZOI. Therefore it is critical that the USG consider the youth demographic in design and implementation to achieve the GFSS objectives.
- **Climate Risk and Disaster Vulnerability:** The three divisions selected remain disaster prone and are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. The southern areas of the Barisal and Khulna divisions are subject to severe tidal surges and Dhaka division is subject to severe river surges, leaving smallholder farmers in these three divisions vulnerable to climatic hazards, and increased incidence of pests and diseases brought on by climate change.
- **Potential for Agriculture-led Growth:** The ZOI has tremendous potential for agriculture-led growth, with fertile soil, abundant water, strong research and extension institutions, and expanding infrastructure. An increased presence of the private sector firms engaged across the value chains and investing in milling, processing and other value adding activities has created significant demand for agricultural produce from the ZOI. Overall yields of rice varieties in this area increased by 7.3 percent from 2011/12 to 2015, from an average of 2.83 metric tons per hectare to 3.03 metric tons per hectare. There has been steady progress in yield increase, which demonstrates a clear opportunity for continued growth.<sup>22</sup> Gross margins collected in this area for rice, wheat, and pulses (Bangladesh's most critical crops for food security), were all positive, suggesting that these crops are profitable for farmers. Additionally, gross margins tended to rise between the baseline and interim, suggesting higher efficiencies (with the notable exception of the third rice growing season (*boro*)). Wheat and pulses showed an increase in gross margins, and 35 percent more farmers surveyed were growing pulses, revealing expansion in this value chain.<sup>23</sup>

Beyond the ZOI, the USG will continue additional efforts that support GFSS objectives. More specifically, knowing the importance of policy efforts in driving transformational changes, the USG will continue working at the national level, as described above. In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Food For Peace (FFP) Development Food Security Activities (DFSA) are being implemented in Sathkira and Khulna, which overlap with the Feed the Future ZOI. In addition, two large FFP's DFSA will also continue in the Bandarban, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Jamalpur, Sirajganj, Kishoreganj, Netrakona, Sunamganj and Habiganj districts. Additionally, FFP's DFSA, USDA and other USG agencies will also respond, when possible, to emergent needs identified in target communities during the implementation of this plan.

### 3. Results Framework

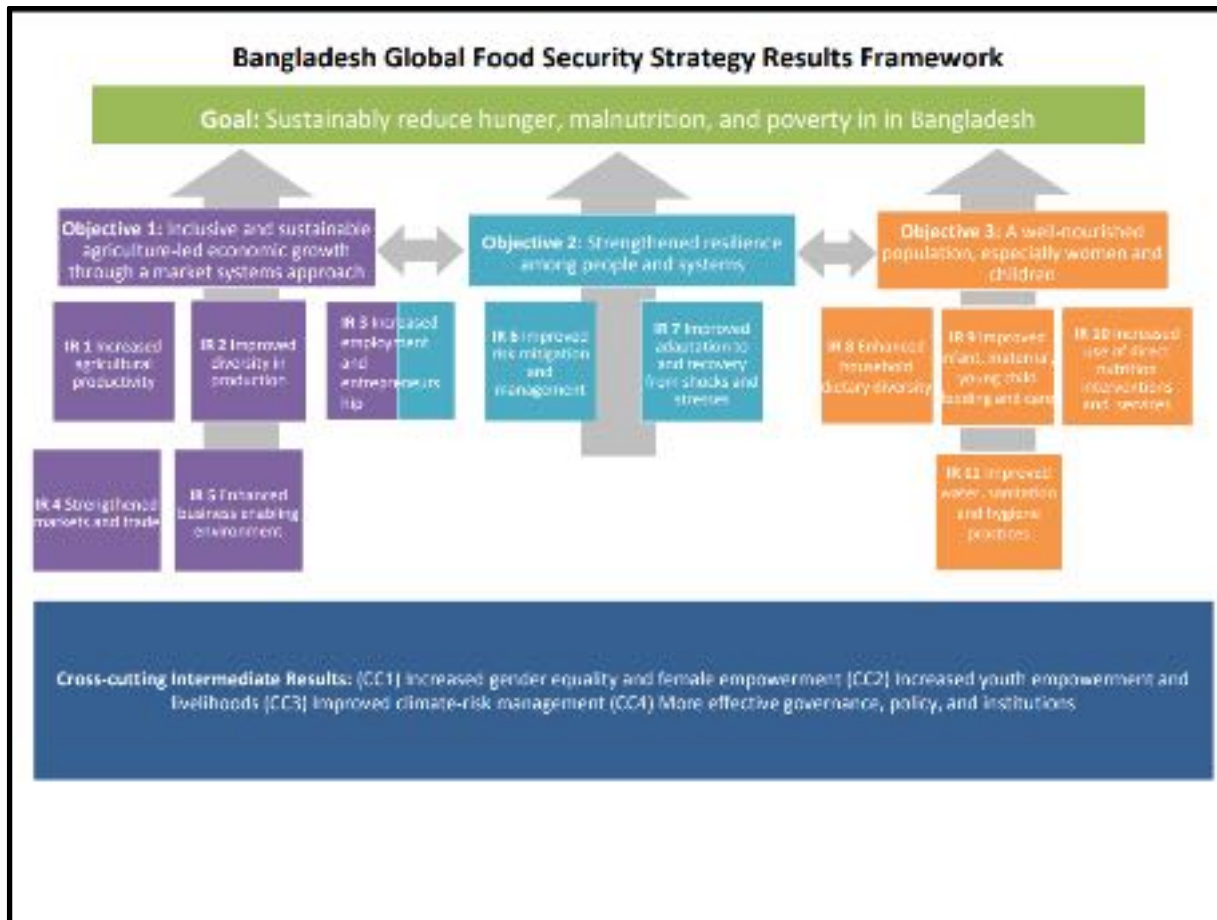
<sup>20</sup> Population Numbers for the Feed the Future High Level Impact Indicators in Bangladesh: Changes from 2011 Baseline to 2015 Midline. IFPRI, 2016. These data do not include the recent addition of Kushtia District.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. CGAP, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Selected Indicators for the Feed the Future Zone of Influence in Bangladesh: Changes from 2011/12 Baseline to 2015 Midline. IFPRI, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. IFPRI, 2016.

The USG efforts to reduce hunger, malnutrition, and poverty in Bangladesh are expressed visually in the results framework below:



## Theory of Change and Approach

The theory of change for this Country Plan is: Inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth through a market systems approach, strengthened resilience among people and systems, and improved access and consumption of safe and diverse food for the population, especially women and children, will lead to sustainable reductions in hunger, malnutrition, and poverty in Bangladesh.

The USG will implement this strategy using a market systems approach. This approach looks at systemic changes at the micro-, meso-, and macro- levels that are necessary for effectively addressing underlying constraints. Transformation of the agriculture sector in Bangladesh will not only require increases in agricultural intensification and diversification, but also strengthening of the market system. This market system is complex and includes production systems, end markets, support services (e.g. financial, business development services, mechanization), value chain governance, the natural ecosystem, and the socio-cultural context. The market systems approach is applied to the three core objectives of Feed the Future as follows:

**Objective 1 - Sustainable and Inclusive Agriculture-led Economic Growth:** The USG's objective is to encourage market actors to take ownership of the change process so they continue to invest in upgrading

over time. The USG will carefully consider the appropriate level of resources and the role needed to foster a strong agriculture-led economy. Donor investments may catalyze change, but markets will need to be viable without donor investments to sustain outcomes. To assure this result, the USG will build and strengthen relationships among local actors, and increase private sector engagement, increase resource mobilization and investment, improve smallholder farmers' access to financial services, and support agricultural technology acceleration efforts. In addition, we will work to improve evidence-based policy making and well-functioning sanitary and phytosanitary systems and to strengthen regional and bilateral investment platforms.

**Objective 2 - Resilience:** The USG will support advancements in the three key components of resilience articulated in the results framework: improved employment and entrepreneurship, risk mitigation and management, and adaptive capacity to shocks. Improvements in these areas will build the resilience of communities and reduce the need for emergency assistance over time. Mitigating climate vulnerabilities and increasing resilience to environmental threats are integral to sustaining and increasing agriculture productivity, and in turn, achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Addressing vulnerabilities to shocks will reduce the possibility of backsliding from achievements made over the last 20 years including increased incomes, reduced poverty, and improved rice production.

**Objective 3 - Nutrition:** The USG will contribute to the GOB efforts on achieving improved nutrition outcomes by leading a multi-sectoral approach to nutrition programming utilizing nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. At the country level, the USG, engaging with the GOB, will advocate for improved food security and nutrition governance and leverage existing relationships and programs with other key donor, civil society, and private sector stakeholders to ensure coordination and sustained commitment to food security and nutrition. The USG is committed to reducing undernutrition among women and children under five, increasing household dietary diversity (with a focus on nutritionally-vulnerable groups), improving water, sanitation and hygiene practices, and promoting the use of nutrition services.

## 4. Program Components

As a result of an extensive review of evidence, stakeholder consultations and learning from the first five years of Feed the Future, the USG will invest in the market systems approach, as described in the Results Framework section. USG supported activities will work to diversify crop production systems based on farmer preferences, market demand and expected growing conditions developed from climate models for the region. In addition, the USG will promote private sector investments in irrigation and mechanization to support smallholder diversification and reduce risk.

### 4.1. Agricultural Productivity and Diversity

According to recent research from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), agriculture-driven growth can generate 2 to 3 times more poverty reduction than growth in other sectors of the Bangladesh economy.<sup>24</sup> The USG has established agricultural productivity and diversification as major program areas to advance inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth through a market

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<sup>24</sup> IFPRI PRSSP Presentation on the Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey (BIHS) dataset, "Eliminating Hunger and Malnutrition: Are Sustainable Solutions in Sight?" on October 4, 2017

systems approach. The USG will strive to continue its partnerships with research institutions that conduct adaptive research focusing on boosting crop and animal (especially fish) productivity, developing biotic and abiotic stress tolerant crop varieties, pest management, nutrition enhancement, and the commercialization of essential agricultural machinery and associated services.

Rice continues to be the dominant crop in Bangladesh and has driven much of the country's agricultural productivity growth. Rice has been a focus of USG interventions, with other crops rotated with rice, such as fruits and vegetables, legumes, and pulses taking a smaller role. The USG will increase work in agriculture value chains that have a high potential for improving farmer incomes, such as fruits, vegetables, and fisheries, with particular focus on value chains that have yet to achieve their expected growth potential. At the same time, our engagement will be informed by market demand and will respond to consumer needs across geographic and socio-economic levels.

Rapid agricultural diversification will be a USG focus, as it is an essential underpinning for Bangladesh to keep up with changes in demand trends,<sup>25</sup> advance nutrition, as well as achieve resilience against the frequent threat<sup>26</sup> of natural disasters such as floods, tropical cyclones, storm surges, and droughts.

Bangladesh's agriculture sector has evolved significantly over the last five years, as demonstrated by Bangladesh's marked improvement in rice production and increased exports of rice and vegetables. According to the World Bank, agriculture has played a key role in reducing Bangladesh's poverty, with over 87 percent of rural people earning at least part of their income from agricultural activities.<sup>27</sup>

However, challenges to agricultural-led growth remain. The small size of farm plots and limited ability to expand household land holdings mean that greater production per unit of land will be key to achieving increased rural incomes and food security. As a result, rice intensification will remain a priority for Feed the Future efforts, in addition to promoting diversification to higher value and other nutritious crops.

## 4.2. Strengthened Market Systems

The agriculture sector consists of an overarching market system that is composed of many different value chains. As the agriculture sector in Bangladesh transitions from primarily subsistence production to commercially oriented production, the functionality and efficiency of the market system needs to improve. In this context, the USG will strengthen strategic value chains and open channels for desired diversification.

From smallholder farmer to end consumer, there are many transactional links within a value chain. In Bangladesh, many of these transactions occur between actors with a skewed balance of power. This often leads to predatory business practices where transactions do not encourage win-win relationships between value chain actors. USG programming will focus on facilitating a shift from transactional relationships to

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<sup>25</sup> DAI, Agriculture Value Chains Activity, Value Chain Selection Report, End Market and Value Chain Analysis, September 2014

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/supporting\\_transformationalchange/Bangladesh-drr-casestudy-transformational-change.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/supporting_transformationalchange/Bangladesh-drr-casestudy-transformational-change.html)

<sup>27</sup> World Bank 2016. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/05/17/bangladeshs-agriculture-a-poverty-reducer-in-need-of-modernization>

long term partnerships between value chain actors. Interventions may include organizing farmers into groups, contract farming arrangements, and linking farmers to private sector-led extension, financing, and business development services. Digital tools will be leveraged to improve connections between actors within, and the transparency and efficiency across, a given value chain, including through mobile phones, digital payments, data analysis, remote sensing, and/or traditional media.

Currently USG programming has identified some of the most binding constraints within the value chains and is working to align incentives and build trust between actors so that transaction benefits are mutually shared. Programming will continue to prioritize the value chains of aquaculture and rice along with crops that are rotated with rice, such as legumes, fruits, vegetables and pulses, to maximize income and nutritional value for farmers. The USG will also continue its investments in value chains with high potential for increasing incomes within the Feed the Future ZOI due to their high inclusive growth potential, such as the non-food value chains of floriculture and natural fibers.

Furthermore, the USG will continue to increase the ability of the private sector to deliver goods and services through agro-inputs, mechanization, and extension, with an emphasis on gender inclusivity as well as primary research on crops and policy advocacy in the agriculture, aquaculture, livestock, and regional trade sectors. These investments will continue to catalyze support services, such as finance, marketing, and information and communication technology that underpin a successful agribusiness market system.

#### 4.3. Food Safety and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards

To achieve fully functioning value chains, a focus on food safety standards and modern market infrastructure is critical. Given the large share of rural non-farm enterprises that pursue activities related to agriculture, the USG, specifically through USDA and USAID, will continue to improve food safety in Bangladesh as a means of improving food security, consumer health, and also providing an outlet for economic progress.

To promote food safety, USG investments will build on previous successes in Bangladesh. In particular, the USG will support the implementation of the new Bangladesh Food Safety Law and leverage other donors' efforts to enhance the institutional capacity of the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA). The BFSA has a mandate to develop food safety regulations including hygiene, sanitation control of contaminants, food sampling, and food additives. USG investments will also strengthen laboratory management and coordination as well as the implementation of preventive controls along food safety value chains.

The USG will continue to invest in sanitary and phytosanitary capacity building activities with the government to strengthen border inspections, research, monitoring, and response management for pest and disease outbreaks across the country. The USG has worked to improve regulatory capacities within the GOB and other relevant organizations to address sanitary and phytosanitary issues related to trade, including border inspection procedures, laboratory management, and disease outbreak response (e.g. avian influenza and wheat blast). This Feed the Future approach of strengthening the business enabling environment for agricultural trade will continue under the GFSS.

#### 4.4. Enhanced Business Enabling Environment and Entrepreneurship

The USG, in partnership with the GOB will work to improve the capacity of private sector businesses, with a particular focus on SMEs and female entrepreneurs, increasing growth and development opportunities for businesses. The USG will also direct its investments towards reducing policy, regulatory, and procedural barriers that inhibit trade, foreign direct investment, domestic investment and business competitiveness. Currently, the business enabling environment in Bangladesh hinders foreign direct investment as well as the growth of domestic businesses. In the latest World Bank Ease of Doing Business study<sup>28</sup>, Bangladesh is ranked number 176 out of 190. The Prime Minister's Office has set a goal of achieving a double-digit ranking by 2021. A 2016 World Economic Forum executive opinion survey on challenges of doing business in Bangladesh highlighted five key issues plaguing businesses: poor infrastructure, corruption, inadequate access to finance, inefficient government bureaucracy, and weak workforce skills.

**Access to Finance:** Access to credit has been identified as one of the top barriers for doing business in Bangladesh, particularly for certain groups including women, small and medium enterprises, and farmers.<sup>29</sup> According to a World Bank study, only 7 percent of the one million potentially eligible small businesses have access to bank credit. Barriers to other types of financing, such as leasing and equity, also present difficulties in Bangladesh. Agricultural entrepreneurs, especially women, also lack access to affordable and appropriate financial products, including insurance.

Consequently, and building upon findings from the August 2017 study conducted by mSTAR on integrating digital financial services,<sup>30</sup> the USG will continue to increase access to finance for men and women farmers and for SMEs. In this way, the USG will address one of the critical elements necessary for rural nonfarm growth to flourish.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4.5. Resilience

Bangladesh is extremely prone to natural hazards including cyclones, storm surges, floods, landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, sea-level rise and increasing saltwater intrusion. In 2016, Bangladesh ranked second in a climate change vulnerability index.<sup>32</sup> GFSS targets people whose food security and livelihoods are subject to natural hazards. The ZOI, which includes the Khulna, Barisal and a portion of the Dhaka divisions, is particularly vulnerable to these hazards. The Dhaka division includes topographic depressions (*haors*) that are prone to inundation. Preparing for and managing the risk of these hazards is essential to safeguarding the significant achievements Bangladesh has made over the last two decades in increasing incomes, reducing poverty and in achieving marked improvements in the production of rice, the country's staple food crop

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<sup>28</sup> World Bank, 2017 EBA for Bangladesh

<sup>29</sup> Systematic Country Diagnostic, World Bank, October 25, 2015, page 52.

<sup>30</sup> [https://www.microlinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/DFS\\_AgMechanization\\_Aug2017.pdf](https://www.microlinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/DFS_AgMechanization_Aug2017.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> World Bank 2016. Dynamics of Rural Growth in Bangladesh: Sustaining Poverty Reduction.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/951091468198235153/Dynamics-of-rural-growth-in-Bangladesh-sustaining-poverty-reduction>

<sup>32</sup> Climate Change and Environmental Risk Atlas. *Maplecroft*, 2016

within the ZOI. Access to mobile money also has the potential to bolster resilience, allowing families to access remittances, store funds, and manage incomes, which can be helpful when responding to and building resilience against economic shocks.

Previous USG investments to enhance absorptive capacity, or the ability to minimize exposure to shocks and recover quickly, have improved households' abilities to prepare for and cope with shocks that have dramatic impact on hunger, malnutrition and poverty.<sup>33</sup> This documented achievement validates continued investment in areas such as emergency awareness and preparedness. For example, the Department of Defense and USAID are designing and constructing Coast Guard Coastal Crisis Management Centers and Multi-Purpose Community Cyclone Shelters. USG assistance programs will establish, maintain, and update early warning systems - tapping into and building on existing strategies for gathering, processing, and disseminating early warning information. Community capacity to absorb shocks will include a focus on emergency shelters that can accommodate vulnerable groups, and some of their resources (including livestock), which are critical in recovery from a crisis. The centers will provide gender and age-specific protection, in accordance with reasonable expectations of privacy and cultural norms.

USG assistance programs will build adaptive capacity, or the ability to make informed choices about alternative livelihood strategies based on changing conditions, by supporting smallholder investment in physical assets and adoption of agricultural technologies shown to increase farmer income and food security. USG assistance will promote women's access to technology and decision-making ability regarding the technology's application. As a result, women will play an increasing role in accessing mechanized irrigation and promoting crop diversification into higher-value and nutrient-dense commodity value chains. Programs will increase agricultural productivity by expanding the use of proven climate-smart agricultural technologies and practices. The USG will work with public and private sector institutions to promote the development and commercialization (including uptake and use) of agricultural technologies, including stress-tolerant varieties of such staples as rice, wheat, and potatoes.

To strengthen transformative capacity, or the system-level enabling actors and conditions for systemic change, the USG efforts will improve local institutions' capacity to respond to recurring shocks and stresses and to plan for future events effectively. Programs will develop technical and managerial knowledge and skill-building in institutions (at the union, upazila, district, and national levels) in key sectors. In the design process accountability mechanisms will be established to ensure inclusiveness and participatory processes. Programming will include water resource management, emergency preparedness, and agricultural extension. The USG will support infrastructure activities, such as upgrading rural feeder roads, new and upgraded market and collection centers, and irrigation structures. Additionally, USG assistance programs will focus on women's empowerment given substantial research indicating the centrality of women's role to positive development and resilience in Bangladesh.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> USAID/Bangladesh Comprehensive Risk and Resilience Assessment, TANGO International, 2016

<sup>34</sup> Ibid



#### 4.6. Increased Employment and Livelihoods

The USG will promote off-farm employment as an important investment for building adaptive capacity for resilience, as diversified livelihoods reduces risk exposure. A higher share of non-farm income sources increases income and diet diversity and has been shown to prevent a return to poverty.<sup>35 36</sup> The USG theory of change focuses on increasing employment opportunities through agriculture value chains and commercialization. The USG will diversify livelihoods in agriculture through cash or niche crops, livestock, aquaculture, basic farm level processing and engaging in opportunities for agricultural activity aggregation. Additionally, programming will promote service provision and value addition elsewhere along agricultural value chains,<sup>37</sup> diversifying livelihoods within the agriculture sector both on-farm and off-farm. USG supported activities will work to diversify crop production systems responding to farmer preferences and expected growing conditions developed from climate models for the region. In addition, the USG will promote private sector investments in irrigation and mechanization.

In rural Bangladesh, non-farm income has been gaining importance as a livelihood diversification strategy, partially due to very small and declining farm sizes. Roughly a third of the rural population is functionally landless, unable to participate as producers in agricultural value chains. Persistent poverty and an inability to participate meaningfully in commercial agriculture drives many to pursue other economic options, either finding off-farm employment in rural areas or migrating to urban areas. A 2013 study estimated that approximately 53 percent of Dhaka slum residents were internal migrants, with the majority of those coming from the ZOI.<sup>38</sup> Secure and diversified livelihoods in rural, semi-urban, and urban areas in Bangladesh, including those within the ZOI, provide opportunities for Bangladeshi citizens to generate income and provide for themselves and their families, which is directly linked to improved nutrition outcomes (see section 4.8). In addition, increasing employment opportunities and spurring entrepreneurship by developing the capacity and enhancing the competitiveness of the private sector will support the development of a full and more robust agriculture food chain. A stronger agricultural food chain, requiring less importation of goods and services, will allow for more diverse food available at affordable prices contributing to this strategy's topline goals.

#### 4.7. Improved Climate Risk Management

The USG will apply science, technology, and innovation to maximize agricultural sector growth. To mitigate the effects of changing weather patterns on agricultural production, the USG will mainstream the application of climate-smart agriculture techniques, especially proven and scalable technologies and practices. Moreover, the USG support will improve the breeding and commercialization (including uptake) of stress tolerance in rice and wheat to counter the effects of soil salinization, flooding and heat stress. USG efforts

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<sup>35</sup> Scott, L. and V. Diwakar. 2016 Ensuring Escapes for Poverty are Sustained in Rural Bangladesh. Overseas Development Institute.

[https://microlinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Report20No.203220-Ensuring20Sustained20Poverty20Escapes\\_Rural20Bangladesh.pdf](https://microlinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Report20No.203220-Ensuring20Sustained20Poverty20Escapes_Rural20Bangladesh.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Report on Assessment of Socio-Economic Factors Behind Rural-Urban Migration in Bangladesh, an Origin Destination Analysis, 2011 (Source: <http://www.assignmentpoint.com/arts/sociology/report-on-assessment-of-socio-economic-factors-behind-rural-urban-migration-in-bangladesh-an-origin-destination-analysis.html>)

<sup>37</sup> Gunjal, K. (2016). Agricultural Risk Management Tools: Resource for the e-learning curriculum course on "Agricultural Risk Assessment and Management for Food Security in Developing Countries." See [http://p4arm.org/app/uploads/2016/05/PARM\\_ARM-Tools-Elearning\\_Gunjal\\_May2016.pdf](http://p4arm.org/app/uploads/2016/05/PARM_ARM-Tools-Elearning_Gunjal_May2016.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> "Internal Migration in Bangladesh: Character, Drivers and Policy Issues" by Richard Marshall & Shibaab Rahman, pg 7

will also continue to engage private sector providers of agricultural extension and strengthen the public extension system to increase smallholder farmer access, with an emphasis on women, to knowledge and use of climate-smart agricultural practices.

The USG will also continue to work with its partners to build household resilience to climate risks and other shocks and stressors through diversification of crops and livelihoods. For example, under a USAID supported partnership, the GOB signed a legal agreement that paves the way for the development of salt-tolerant, genetically-modified (GM) rice. Bangladesh is the first Feed the Future target country to approve a GM food crop (Bt eggplant), and is setting the foundation for an extensive assortment of biotech crops in the future. The USG and its partners will build upon this momentum by working with the GOB to develop a clear policy framework that supports the rollout of commercially-driven and environmentally-sustainable biotech products that will enhance yields.

Finally, in 2015, USAID worked with the World Bank's Agricultural Insurance Development Program to analyze the feasibility of different options for agricultural insurance. The evidence indicates that Bangladesh faces heavy constraints in its ability to develop appropriate crop and livestock insurance products for the country's smallholder farmer population. The USG is currently supporting the Bangladesh Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock to pilot livestock insurance. Moving forward, the USG will explore insurance products as a climate risk management tool for smallholder farmers and small businesses, with attention to the specific circumstances for women and youth who often have less collateral, business history, and familiarity with risk mitigation products. The USG investments could be directed towards facilitating the development and bundling of high quality livestock and crop insurance products with the potential of using digital technologies when and where appropriate to reach many types of farmers.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4.8. Nutrition

The USG will seek to reduce undernutrition in Bangladesh by promoting greater dietary diversity and appropriate child feeding and increasing access to health services, safe water and sanitation. In addition, this strategy links agriculture and nutrition via three pathways: food production, agricultural income, and women's empowerment. These conceptual pathways will be used to systematically consider opportunities and threats to nutrition across all GFSS programs components, supporting preventative approaches that have potential to decrease both wasting and stunting. Within market systems, interventions will be designed to increase women's empowerment and improve nutrition through inclusive agricultural competitiveness and economic growth.

***Household dietary diversity:*** The average person in Bangladesh gets about 80 percent of dietary energy intake from cereals, with 70 percent coming from rice alone.<sup>40</sup> Inadequate intake of diverse, nutrient-dense foods leads to micronutrient deficiencies and acute and chronic undernutrition. USG investments will

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<sup>39</sup> Salman, Sadruddin Muhammad; Mahul, Olivier; Bagazonzya, Henry K.. 2010. *Agricultural insurance in Bangladesh : promoting access to small and marginal farmers*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/482331468013812662/Agricultural-insurance-in-Bangladesh-promoting-access-to-small-and-marginal-farmers>

<sup>40</sup> Osmani, S.R., et al. (2016) Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Bangladesh, World Food Program.

continue to facilitate increased food production to ensure availability of adequate, nutritious and diverse food for household consumption. USG programming will build on previous investments and leverage the experiences of other bilateral and multilateral donors to scale up interventions that have had a demonstrated effectiveness in improving child nutrition, including: homestead food production; behavior change communication to reduce child marriage and improved feeding practices; building household and community capacity to preserve and process seasonal foods for year-round consumption; promoting the production and consumption of animal sourced proteins; and the consumption of biofortified crops and fortified food products. FFP programs that raise agricultural and non-agricultural incomes will allow the most vulnerable and food insecure poor households to purchase food and non-food items that support healthy diets. Efforts to empower women will improve nutrition by enabling expenditures on food and health care, and improve capacity for infant and young child feeding and care.

***Maternal, infant and young child feeding and care:*** Overall, only 23 percent of Bangladeshi children aged 6-23 months are fed according to recommended infant and young child feeding (IYCF) guidelines.<sup>41</sup> USG programs will improve the nutritional status of mothers and infants and young children, particularly during the critical 1,000 days of pregnancy and the first two years of life. Programs, such as social behavior change communication (SBCC) programming, will harmonize with national nutrition strategies and guidelines and coordinate with other health initiatives like the Food for Peace, Global Health Initiative, the Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths Initiative, and with government and non-government health facilities at multiple levels. SBCC campaigns on maternal, infant and young child feeding and care will link to other nutrition-sensitive activities. The primary target groups for SBCC campaigns include women of reproductive age, pregnant and lactating women, and caregivers of children under five. Secondary audiences include family members, particularly male decision-makers and mothers-in-law, men, and youth groups.

***Increased use of direct nutrition services:*** Assistance programs will increase use of direct nutrition services that are primarily offered through community-level facilities by strengthening the capacity of health systems to deliver nutrition services and stimulating community demand for those services. The USG will partner with public and private sector health service providers to provide direct nutrition services such as: vitamin A supplementation for children 6-59 months and lactating mothers; iron and folic acid supplementation for pregnant women, adolescent girls and children; growth monitoring and promotion; acute undernutrition management; and zinc and oral rehydration salts supplementation for the treatment of diarrhea. The USG will work with relevant stakeholders to improve multi-sectoral coordination to improve the nutritional status of the population.

***Improved water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices:*** The integration of WASH into nutrition programming has been proven to significantly impact nutritional and health outcomes.<sup>42,43</sup> USG activities to improve WASH practices will build on the implementation success of prior USG programs in integrating

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<sup>41</sup> National Institute of Population Research and Training - NIPORT/Bangladesh, Mitra and Associates, and ICF International. 2016. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2014. Dhaka, Bangladesh: NIPORT, Mitra and Associates, and ICF International. Available at <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR311/FR311.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> Newman, J., 2013. "How Stunting is Related to Having Adequate Food, Environmental Health and Care: Evidence from India, Bangladesh, and Peru." World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>43</sup> Raihan MJ, Farzana FD, Sultana S, Haque MA, Rahman AS, Waid JL, et al. (2017) Examining the relationship between socio-economic status, WASH practices and wasting. PLoS ONE 12(3): e0172134. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0172134>

nutrition and WASH interventions in Bangladesh.<sup>44</sup> WASH interventions will include the design of effective social behavior change campaigns around the socio-cultural barriers people face to practicing good food hygiene, sanitary latrine use, and handwashing. Additional WASH interventions, including but not limited to investment in increasing access to basic and safely managed sanitation and drinking water services, community management (i.e. operations and maintenance), and improved market and government linkages, will be supported targeting chronically vulnerable households and communities within and outside the ZOI. WASH interventions will also promote private sector involvement in WASH delivery and maintenance. Interventions will have an additional focus on women's empowerment to achieve greater impact on health and nutritional outcomes. USG investments will promote agricultural and essential water, sanitation, and hygiene practices that are safe and environmentally sound.

#### 4.9. Optimizing Economic Inclusion

The USG will promote women's empowerment as a method to improve dietary diversity, farmer and household income, and resilience. Efforts will aim not only to increase the incomes of women and youth, but also to increase their voice and agency to make nutritionally-sound decisions related to that income. The working-age population is estimated to grow annually by more than 2.2 million people over the next 10 years. Moreover, Bangladesh is experiencing a fall in the employment growth rate. As a result, youth unemployment will likely remain a sizable problem for Bangladeshi policy makers.<sup>45</sup> According to the School to Work Transition Survey for 2013,<sup>46</sup> youth unemployment in Bangladesh stood at 10.3 percent, with unemployment rates for young women almost four times higher than those of young men (i.e. the female youth unemployment rate was 22.9 percent while the male rate was 6.2 percent).

Limitations in mobility restrict women from accessing information that may be available to men, such as knowledge about new inputs and best practices. In fact, productivity differentials among companies owned by men and by women have been found to be mainly the result of differences in access to productive information, technology, and inputs.<sup>47</sup> Lack of control over resources and decision-making means women are less likely to take advantage of agriculture support services. The 2015 Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey (BIHS) showed a positive correlation between increases in women's empowerment and improvements in both household dietary diversity and agricultural production diversity.<sup>48</sup> Therefore promoting women's empowerment will remain paramount to attaining Bangladesh's development goals.

Consequently, the potential for gender equality and female empowerment frames the way the USG engages in Bangladesh. Under the GFSS, the USG will continue to identify barriers to women's meaningful contribution to, and benefit from activities. This may include identifying alternative means to access information and inputs. It may also include promoting appropriate technologies based on input and preferences from women. Additionally, GFSS programming will pursue empirically-verified opportunities to

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<sup>44</sup> SPRING. 2015. Use of Tippy Taps and Handwashing Practices in Southern Bangladesh: Qualitative Study. Arlington, VA: Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project.

<sup>45</sup> Towards Solutions for Youth Employment. A Baseline Survey 2015. S4YE. p 49

<sup>46</sup> Towards Solutions for Youth Employment. A Baseline Survey 2015. S4YE. p 49.

<sup>47</sup> Blackden and Hallward-Driemeir 2013

<sup>48</sup> <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=hdl:1902.1/21266>

expand market opportunities for women. For example, the decision to work in the cut flowers market was partially made because this value chain is less than 25 years old, and is not subject to the cultural restrictions that are widely present in other more established value chains. Additionally, the decision to work in the natural fibers industry (rope, floor mats, mattresses and handicrafts) was partially made because the majority of stakeholders in microenterprises working along that value chain are women. The USG will continue to initiate activities that provide for greater gender equity while providing access to training to prepare vulnerable groups, youth, and women for employment. For instance, facilitating women's groups to explore child care options and schemes within the community will increase women's time and availability for productive activities. The USG will continue to factor in the vulnerabilities, coping strategies, and adaptive capacities of women and youth in its efforts to mitigate risk and to adapt to the effects of environmental shocks and stressors.

#### 4.10. Advancing Country Leadership Through Policy Systems

The USG will build on its long-standing efforts to support the GOB in its policies and policy-making processes to advance food security. Key priorities include:

- **Supporting evidence-based, innovative improvements in the design and implementation of Bangladesh's social safety net system.** The most vulnerable households in the ZOI, those lacking land and other productive assets, are most likely relying on one of the 100 social safety nets operated by the GOB. Despite recent increases, social protection in Bangladesh still has several shortcomings: coverage is limited; transfers often do not reach the neediest; and transfers are too small to prevent households from falling back into poverty.<sup>49</sup> USAID/Bangladesh supports analysis that helps the GOB to improve its safety net programs.<sup>50</sup> One example, partially funded through USAID's Policy Research and Strategy Support Program, is IFPRI-WFP's joint Transfer Modality Research Initiative, which demonstrates that safety net cash transfers combined with high quality nutrition behavior change communication (BCC) reduce childhood stunting three times more than the national average decline.<sup>51</sup> The GOB can use these and other emerging results to refine their safety net programs.
- **Supporting the GOB in implementing an action plan for the 2016 Seed Policy.** Harmonization of laws/procedures across countries in the South Asia region could facilitate faster release and wider distribution of improved varieties appropriate for local conditions and open regional seed markets. The GOB has taken a commendable step in this direction by developing and enacting the Seed Law to support the National Seed Policy. The USG will coordinate support to the GOB in the implementation of policies to promote private sector R&D activities and associated intellectual property rights that directly support innovations in seed production and marketing of inbred varieties of rice, wheat, potato, sugarcane, and jute.

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<sup>49</sup> S.R. Osmani and others (2016), *Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Bangladesh*. World Food Programme.

<sup>50</sup> For examples, see Suzanne Nelson and others (2015), *Ex-Post Impact Assessment Review of IFPRI's Research Program on Social Protection, 2000–2012*. Independent Impact Assessment Report No. 40. IFPRI.

<sup>51</sup> Ahmed AU, Hoddinott JF, Roy S, Sraboni E, Quabili WR, Margolies A. (2016), Which kinds of social safety net transfers work best for the rural ultra poor in Bangladesh? Operation and impacts of the transfer modality research initiative.

- **Supporting the implementation of the National Nutrition Plan of Action.** The 2015-2016 Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Program assessment for Bangladesh suggests the GOB should formulate and implement the Second National Plan of Action on Nutrition (NPAN2); implement the Comprehensive Social Behavior and Change Communication Strategy; and improve stakeholder coordination through the Bangladesh National Nutrition Council. As a result of the momentum started by the SUN Movement and continuous engagement by a wide variety of stakeholders, including USAID and other major donors, the GOB launched NPAN2 on August 14, 2017. USAID will use its opportunity to collaborate with other stakeholders in holding the GOB accountable to its commitments in the NPAN2.
- **Continue supporting GOB efforts to create and operationalize a unified agency for food safety.** The GOB has over a dozen ministries/agencies involved in ensuring food safety, leading to a lack of coordination and clarity of mandates and unpredictable and ineffective enforcement. USAID has an opportunity to collaborate with FAO in supporting the GOB in operationalizing and implementing the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority.

**Institutional architecture for food security:** USAID commissioned an institutional architecture assessment of Bangladesh in 2014. The assessment concludes that the Ministries of Agriculture and Food are politically powerful and have well-established structures, systems, and processes, making Bangladesh stand out among other Feed the Future countries in this respect. Despite the GOB's demonstrated commitment to the sector, the assessment suggests that they could improve their support of food security by increasing resource mobilization, strengthening implementation and project management skills, and expanding inclusivity and stakeholder consultation.

The USG will continue to strengthen the GOB's ability to implement important policies and programs, working with different levels of government from line ministries to local district offices. For nutrition, for instance, the USG will engage in stakeholder platforms that help shape the GOB's commitments to nutrition, while at the same time working with district-level governments to integrate agricultural and nutrition-based interventions.

**Mutual accountability:** The GOB has several processes set up for mutual accountability on food security, though with variable effectiveness. The Food Planning and Monitoring Unit, established with support from USAID, coordinates inter-ministerial thematic groups on food availability, access, and utilization, while FAO coordinates the Local Consultative Group on Agricultural and Rural Development. Perhaps even more important than formal platforms for stakeholder consultation are the processes for developing policies themselves. As a prime example, the GOB has been very consultative in developing its Country Investment Plan, engaging with donors, the private sector, and civil society.

While the GOB is clearly committed to food security, the country still faces daunting challenges in its development, many of which require concerted policy action--from the development of evidence-based policies to the implementation of effective programs.

#### 4.11 Agricultural Research Coordination

To ensure proper incorporation of new and innovative approaches into the design, implementation and learning of food security and nutrition programming, the GFSS Country Plan, with guidance from the Global Food Security Research Strategy, will leverage new and improved technologies, practices, and expertise from USAID/Washington staff, Feed the Future Innovation Labs, the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the National Agricultural Research System (NARS), centrally-funded research programs, and other food security stakeholders including members of the partner country government, civil society, and the private sector. Close collaboration between the USG value chain programming and in-country Washington-funded research investments will be highly encouraged by both D.C. and Field staff so as to ensure uptake of research-derived technology innovations.

### 5. Stakeholder Engagement Platforms

The USG engages with the Local Consultative Group (LCG) to address the goals and objectives of the Global Food Security Strategy. The LCG is principle consultative body for the GOB and donor organizations in Bangladesh. Through the LCG, the GOB (led by the Economic Relations Division (ERD), Ministry of Finance) and 49 Bangladesh-based representatives of bilateral and multilateral development partners (including 5 International Financial Institutions, the 13 UN agencies with representational offices in Bangladesh and the UN Resident Coordinator) meet regularly to develop and monitor plans for development cooperation. The objective of LCG is to ensure effective and efficient use of external aid, in accordance with the Principles of the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action, and Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. USAID currently serves as donor co-chair of the LCG. USAID has also organized specific working groups that bring together implementing partners and different offices in USAID. These include the Gender Working Group, Nutrition Working Group, Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group, and the Internal Resilience Working Group.

There is significant complementarity among donors in the area of food security. DANIDA supports both agri-business development as well as an initiative to improve the productivity of female farmers. The Dutch Development Cooperation is also working in the area of food security, and in particular in developing the private sector's capacity to provide fortified food stuffs and the government's capacity to monitor their efforts. The UK Department for International Development, Japan International Cooperation Agency, and Swedish International Cooperation Agency all have programs to address constraints to access to finance for entrepreneurs.

The USG is partnering with the European Union to co-fund the Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH) project (signed in 2015), which is a capacity strengthening project for the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit of the Ministry of Food, and other government agencies involved in developing and managing programs of nutrition-sensitive interventions. The World Bank, Asia Development Bank, and International Financial Cooperation have several grant programs that support their loans. In Bangladesh, the development banks generally support trade and investment policy reform, as well as fund large infrastructure activities.

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## U.S. Government Interagency Partners

