

FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY **BANGLADESH**



CAREGIVER CAPABILITIES

Since 2014, FH Bangladesh has been improving caregiver capabilities through the Care Group (CG) model. A CG is a group of 10-15 volunteers who regularly meet with FH staff for training. Each of these volunteers visits their neighbors at least once a month to share the lessons and practice new behaviors. There are currently over 467 operational CGs in Bangladesh, with over 4,085 CG volunteers delivering lessons to 31,957 caregivers. Care Group modules promote household level, interpersonal behavior change in

each component of the Nurturing Care Framework to produce positive early childhood development outcomes.

Good Health

FH Care Groups share critical health messages and help the community to practice those behaviors in a safe environment. These include basic health and nutrition messages for mothers and children, basic hygiene, as well as ensuring members are aware of health services offered by the government.

FH staff work with young and expecting mothers to identify challenges as well as helping them by sharing positive maternal and child health behaviors and practices. Currently FH has 2,411 volunteer health mother trainers working with over 17,000 expecting and young mothers.

Adequate Nutrition

Modules focused on adequate nutrition emphasize essential nutrition actions for pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children; food variety and balanced diet; Vitamin A deficiency and supplements; caring and feeding the sick child; child vaccinations; household water purification; and proper handwashing practices.

Responsive Caregiving

Modules focused on infant feeding and behavior cues improve responsive breastfeeding and complementary feeding.

Security and Safety

Modules focused on security and safety emphasize awareness and reduction of toxic stress. Lessons include how to identify, decrease, and mitigate sources of toxic stress. Staff also work to change social norms around domestic violence and other underlying causes of trauma and toxic stress.

Early Learning

Modules focused on early learning include lessons on everyday early stimulation activities, such as caregivers playing with their children and encouraging them to enroll children in preschool. Caregivers are taught how to lovingly respond to their children with a hands-on approach. Interactive “make and play” and “reading” days promote

positive interactions, relationship building, and cognitive learning through age-appropriate books and homemade toys.

EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

ECD Centers

FH Bangladesh operates early childhood development (ECD) centers, working directly and indirectly in 99 community-based preschool programs. Children are engaged in early childhood stimulation and school-readiness activities, including developing literacy, numeracy, motor, and socio-emotional skills through games, listening to stories, drawing, and other activities. ECD centers follow a curriculum with lesson plans developed by FH.

Food Security and Livelihoods

FH staff work to improve livelihoods through savings groups (SGs), where individuals learn about finances, savings, literacy, and numeracy. Members also build solidarity by saving together, participating in income generation activities, and implementing skills that improve health/social conditions. They learn to set agendas, make group decisions, record resolutions, solve problems, and pray together.

Since 2015, over 400 SG members have received cattle raising and chicken farming training. Over 500 female SG members received training on sewing and starting their own home-based businesses. There are more than 687 SGs with over 12,898 members who can open and manage their own bank accounts. As of September 2019, the total savings of all SG participants exceeds \$1,053,672.



Community Libraries

FH Bangladesh has 34 community libraries countrywide. Libraries increase access to books for children and adults, and build a community learning environment. Some are located in rural communities and others inside ECD centers. Books are selected by a committee from the country office. All books are in the Bengali language, with some additional copies in English. They include stories, fiction, poems, biographies, history of Bangladesh and other countries, and more.

Adult Literacy Program

The Integrated Adult Literacy Program, locally known as Shakkhor Ma (“Literate Mothers”), works with more than 840 women from different communities. Forty literacy groups, consisting of

25 members each, meet six days a week for two hours. Literacy lessons begin with letters, words, and numbers, and conclude with increasing reading speed, reading comprehension, and math. After completing the course, 95% of the Shakkhor Ma members became functionally literate, meaning they can read, write, and perform simple calculations. These women use these skills every day, from counting to keeping records. Their self confidence and value have increased as they can now read billboards, posters, and food packaging. Becoming literate also means they become decision-makers in their families and communities regarding child schooling, marriage, and more. These women are also sending their children to school more regularly and assisting them in their studies.

SUCCESSES AND SUSTAINABILITY

Evidence (Case story)

Pronita has two sons and one daughter. Before becoming an FH Bangladesh Care Group (CG) volunteer, Pronita did not exclusively breastfeed her children for the first six months, but regularly gave them cow's milk, bread, and water. When she became pregnant last year, she began using the practices promoted in the CG, and soon became a CG volunteer herself. Pronita delivered her youngest child in the hospital, exclusively breastfed until six months, and is now providing complementary feeding to her nine-month-old child. Pronita says this younger child is much healthier than her older two children. She is proud to be a CG volunteer.

Impact

Survey data and qualitative reports show the impact of CGs over time. Baseline and mid-term evaluation surveys (2014 and 2017

respectively) show that the mean household dietary diversity score increased from 6.3 to 7.5, sanitary latrine access increased from 43% to 59%, and the percentage of caregivers of young children reporting hand washing before eating increased from 27% to 66%. Staff are observing improvements in key practices, such as seeing more pregnant mothers attend antenatal care visits and taking supplements.

Sustainability

Care Groups allow FH to improve practices among a large number of people within a short time and at a very low cost. After all of the current CGs have completed promotion of key health practices, FH began to promote caregiver practices related to early childhood stimulation and learning through the CGs to improve cognitive development and school readiness, while continuing with regular followup health messages.