

# Project

## Information Booklet

Health, Nutrition & Food Security (HN & FS) project for marginalized children & their families



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A CARE Bangladesh & Danone Japan Partnership Project





## Introducing HN&FS Project

Personal hygiene habits and basic health awareness amongst the poor are low in Bangladesh. In addition, about half the children under five are malnourished with high rates of micronutrient deficiencies. CARE Bangladesh has been working for decades through a variety of approaches- food security, health, nutrition and women empowerment- to address these issues.

In mid-June 2010, Danone Japan approached CARE to undertake a one year program that would educate elementary school children and their parents on healthy behaviors and to improve health, nutrition and food security practices of approximately 7668 marginalized children and their families in Bogra district. The project works in five sub-districts (Upazilas) and helps to transfer CARE's experiences and learning to marginalized children and tend to their families' health, hygiene, nutrition and food security.

A local instructor is hired and trained to provide participatory sessions on good hygienic practices and a balanced diet. The instructor also meets their parents, usually once a week to explain the information which she has provided to the children. The instructor tries to encourage the government and NGO health providers to attend these sessions as well so that women know where they can get services from, if needed.

CARE coordinates linkages among the instructors, the School Management Committees (SMC), Parent-Teachers Associations (PTA), government education officers, health providers and other key community stakeholders to promote greater coordination and support locally, such that in future these institutions can assume responsibility in continuing innovative activities promoted through the project. Based on a model from Japan, each school has developed a vegetable garden that they maintain and harvest. Some of the vegetables are consumed while others are sold to provide some funds for the schools.

The project is currently being implemented in 50 schools, mostly government run. It has received a positive response from all the stakeholders. Teachers have commented that the children are much cleaner when they come to school now. Mothers claim that their children perform better in schools. Children have reported that they are excited to learn about these topics and discuss the topics with their parents and siblings. High schools in the vicinity have expressed willingness to team up with primary schools to adopt this sort of learning. While this is currently only a one year project, several such schools have approached CARE to include this strategy in future efforts.



### Project Target Participants

Total Upazilas	5
Total schools	50
Total classes involved	199
Total student in 50 schools	12722
Selected students	7668
Number of mother groups	229
Total mothers	7023
Total SMC members	580
Total PTA members	485

### Project Target Upazilas

Shibgonj  
Sherpur  
Sonatola  
Gabtali  
Sariakandi

### Project Objectives

- Improve Health, Hygiene and Nutritional practices of children and their families studying in selected government primary schools, within 5 Upazilas of Bogra district, through imparting HHN education.
- Promote consumption of nutritional products such as fruits and vegetables.
- Introduce a school gardening program in a fun way, to promote practice of gardening of nutritional fruits and vegetables in the long run.



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Shobnom, a little girl of 14, studies in Ghordor Government Primary School under Sherpur Upazila. Earlier, she did not seem interested in attending school, as described by her mother. She used to be ill most of the time and had no interest or attention in studies. It was after she was brought under the project that Shobnom started showing interest in attending school. She now knows why hygiene is important, why hand washing before eating and after using the toilet is important. She knows what to eat to stay healthy and what to avoid eating. These lessons have made her interested in school and studies once again. So much so that she stood first on her last terminal examination. She now attends school regularly, eats well, does well in studies and takes interest in sports and other activities which is important for a child's growth. Shobnom now follows a healthy, happy lifestyle.

## Health, Hygiene & Nutrition Education

### School sessions:

The primary activity of this project, which is to impart health, hygiene and nutrition education, is being conducted through trained instructors, mostly women from local communities. Each of the 50 schools (47 Government and 3 Registered) has one dedicated instructor who carries out the education sessions. The project covers a total of 7668 students in these schools. There are 199 classes and instructors conduct two sessions every month according to a curriculum that covers the following: food & nutrition, importance of food, types of food, diseases caused by malnutrition and its prevention, balanced diet, personal hygiene, usage of safe water and so on. Instructors use interactive materials like passport, wheel, flashcards, posters etc. through Participatory Action Learning Techniques to demonstrate the topics practically and impart quality education.

Instructors require extensive support to maintain the quality of education delivery. To brush up their facilitation skills, instructors are provided with on-the-job training by Project Officers and monthly meetings are organized at CARE Bangladesh Bogra Field Office. The instructors talk about problems they face, seek clarification on subjects they teach and come away with renewed confidence and improved understanding on imparting education.



### Mother group sessions:

Following the notion that engaging mothers is a sure way of disseminating education across families and ingraining learning in children through practice at home, the instructors move a step ahead and mobilize mothers of children in groups to conduct learning sessions similar those that children experience. There are 7023 individual mothers in the 5 Upazilas who have been organized into 229 groups so that the sessions can be delivered in a more controlled way twice a month. In addition to regular learning on health, hygiene and nutrition, mothers are provided education on ways of preserving safe water and its importance, the correct way of cutting, cleaning and cooking vegetables, the importance of having safe and clean latrines, so on and so forth.

### Vegetable garden and learning sessions:

In line with the third objective of the project, to promote the practice of growing nutritious food to address food security, the project has developed vegetable gardens in school compounds. With support from instructors, children learn how to grow nutritious food on these gardens, in a fun and exciting way, and they have themselves grown these gardens. There are Learning Vegetable Gardens in all the schools (except 3 schools due to unavailability of land) where they grow different seasonal vegetables and the instructors take classes with students twice every month to teach them the names of the vegetables both in Bangla and in English. Furthermore they are taught about vitamin contents and nutrition values in vegetables, as well as the processes and periods of cultivation and harvesting. This sort of practical knowledge also helps the students to understand their school session curriculum much better. In 3 schools where land is unavailable for gardening, instructors usually conduct sessions theoretically.





Mr. S.M. Jahangir Alam is the Headmaster of Khanpur Primary School. He happened to have a house with a large amount of land in front of it. Unfortunately, the beautiful piece of land was mostly redundant. His wife asked him several times to start gardening on the land but he never showed any interest mainly because he thought it was a lot of hassle. His perception changed when CARE Bangladesh started the project. The gardening initiatives promoted by CARE made Mr. Alam realize how fascinating gardening can be! He now takes great interest in his personal garden, which he has grown all by himself. He now knows about food and nutrition, understands that growing food reduces household expenditure on food, and motivates school children and everyone around to start growing vegetable gardens of their own.

## Health Service and Gardening for Food Security

### Health camps:

The project has been trying to improve the health conditions of the students and their families and as a support initiative. Consequently, general health services are provided to the students and their family members in health camps. Out of the targeted 50 schools, 12 most vulnerable schools with lack of access to health facilities have been selected. Camps are organized in school compounds. In the beginning a doctor from the Upazila Health Complex imparts key information on primary healthcare and how to deal with common ailments, such as common cold, diarrhea, pneumonia, etc. Additionally, the doctor examines students and their family members, especially pregnant mothers and children between 0-1 years of age. He then prescribes medicines and refers them to hospitals in case of serious or complicated diseases.



### Fruit garden development:

Along with the Learning Vegetable Garden, the project is developing a fruit garden in the schools: so far the project officials have managed to develop fruit gardens in 14 schools. Those 14 gardens contain different type of fruit trees like mango, litchi, guava, lemon, olive, orange and a few gardens also include medicinal plants. The project envisions building up habits of consuming fruits as a healthy behavior to the students. Some students are seen to have made their parents buy fruits for them.

### Large scale garden development:

In order to develop sustainable mechanisms, the project decided to develop large-scale vegetables or fruit gardens, the proceeds of which could be sold year round to provide schools with additional incomes. The idea is to be able to use the money to finance project activities and provide stipends and scholarships to meritorious students. Till date only two schools namely Korotkola Government Primary School under Shibgonj Upazila and Roshinabari Registered Primary School under Sonatola Upazila have developed two large scale gardens sized 33 and 16 decimals respectively. They grow seasonal vegetables and fruits and have already started selling to teachers, students and as well as to others in the community. Schools are now looking to sell proceeds in local markets as well. Land for these gardens was provided by the community, and the project intends to replicate the feat elsewhere.





Sultana Khatoon resides in Sonatola Upazila. Her husband is a farmer and they have 4 children. All of her children attend Roshinabari Registered Primary School. Household chores always kept Sultana busy and she never had any hobbies of her own. After witnessing the gardens made by students at her children's school, Sultana was inspired and started growing vegetables in front of her house. For the last 7 months, she has been growing vegetables and it has made her financially very stable. She makes her family eat fresh vegetables and also sells the rest of them. It is also reducing her household expenditure on food, she reported. In addition, through this process she is helping her make money, which is reinvesting in other income-earning endeavors. Earlier, Sultana had 3 hens but now she has 22! She carefully listens to the instructors and follows the instructions they provide. She and her family now eat well and are conscious about health and hygiene. This is an example of how gardening is moving beyond schools and in to nearby communities.



## Yoghurt & Vegetable distribution:

To contribute towards the food security component of the project, consumption of healthy and nutritious food items like yoghurt (Shaktidoi) and vegetables is promoted. Students are given Shaktidoi, which is also a product of Grameen Danone Foods Ltd., as nutritious right after learning sessions. Fruits and vegetables of high nutrition value are also distributed to students, who have reported that collectively these products help refresh their minds and bodies during and after school hours. It has also helped change their consumption behavior and they now feel more interested to consume nutritious food. At the same time, these activities also have decreased absenteeism among the students. Till date, 30672 cups of Shakti Yoghurt and over 2820 kilograms of vegetables have been distributed to targeted students. In future, the project will continue to create demand, stimulate purchasing behavior and develop sustainable market based mechanisms of bringing nutritious food to the doorsteps of marginalized children and their households.

## Coordination and Stakeholder Support

### Coordination meetings:

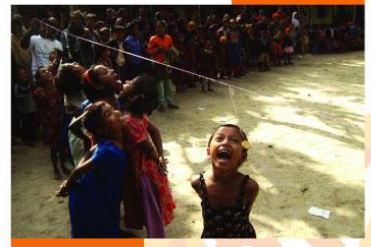
The long term goal of this project is to develop mechanisms to include project activities into school curriculums and activity plans, as well as make it a part of local government planning and resource allocation system. This requires close coordination and support from the local and national government if necessary. At the district level, the District Commissioner has provided buy-in for project activities and sits on annual project review sessions to discuss problems and advice solutions. At the Upazila level, committees called the Upazila Coordination Teams (UCTs) have been formed to provide the project with support and appropriate direction from the local government. Officers such as the Upazila Primary Education Officer, Upazila Health and Social Welfare Officer, Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer serve on this committee, which is chaired by the Upazila Nirbahi Officer in respective Upazilas. At school level, school Headmasters, who also chair the School Management Committees from each school, serve as members on this committee. They all meet on a quarterly basis to get updates about project activities and discuss about challenges and solutions. The government is also now stepping up its role within schools by forming PTAs and SMCs, committees within schools that meet regularly to coordinate activities. HN&FS project is trying to build their capacity by raising their awareness on project activities, defining their roles clearly, developing action plans for them, so on and so forth.



Bishwajit Kumar Saha is the Upazila Education Officer in Sherpur Upazila. Back in his youth, he saw the Rural Maintenance Project of CARE Bangladesh; in which CARE mainly made roads and developed infrastructure around the rural areas of Bangladesh. From that time, he had a positive notion in his mind about CARE. A good number of years passed by and Mr. Saha got posted to Sherpur as the Upazila Education Officer. As the Education Officer, he was very impressed with CARE and Danone Japan's initiative. So much so that he now project activities by serving on coordination committees and providing time and energy to discuss project's progress. He regularly visits schools, seeks information on what has been transpiring, and garners support from other local government institutions as well. He even conducts surprise visits to school, in order to monitor what is happening and regularly provides positive suggestions to foster long term improvements.

## School events:

In order to communicate positive outcomes engendered by the project, its relevance to children, their families and pressure groups from communities at large, the project organizes annual school sports and cultural events, which is a large gathering of children, parents, teachers, instructors and key stakeholders from everywhere. In these events, students participate in dramas which talk about the importance of having knowledge and hygiene, or they sing songs about balanced diet or maybe compete in writing essays on health related topics, such as writing the names of 10 fruits both in Bangla and English and the vitamins they contain, and take part in sports that are related to their subject matter in innovative ways. People from all over witness these events, experience learning through children themselves, and in the process come to appreciate and support project activities.



## M&E and Documentation:



### School & Household monitoring:

To track progress, the project developed an internal measurement tool, named "Household and School Monitoring". The objective is to allow CARE to consistently and accurately collect, analyze and interpret information on changes that are being engendered as a result of project activities. As such, the tool has been in effective use since June 2011. Instructors, who are trained, use the tool to collect information in school on a monthly basis, and in households on a bi-monthly basis. CARE appointed Project Officers then analyze and compile information, which is aptly presented in monthly reports published by the project.

## M & E Framework:

The project have decided to develop a strong and effective monitoring & evaluation framework for tracking the progress of the project tagging to some key factors related to the health, hygiene and food security education. Data collection of all the students and the framework development process is underway. Area of improvement for the project and its activities can be found very easily through the M&E framework.

## Achievements

### Coordination:

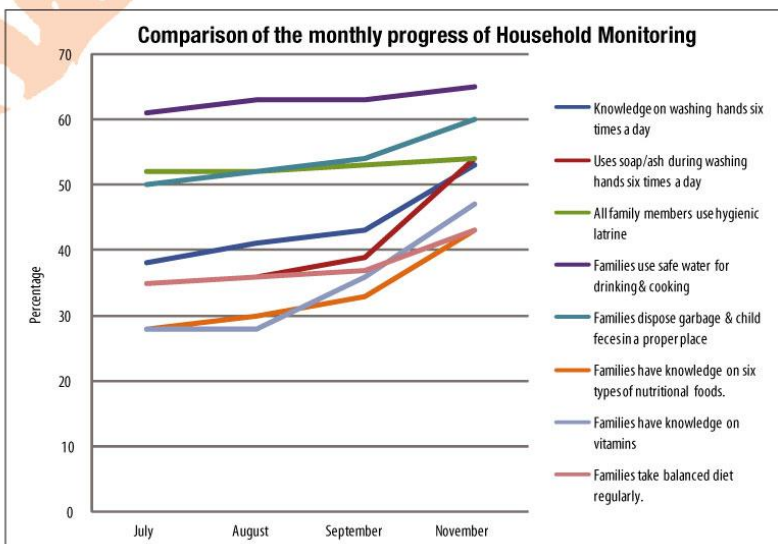
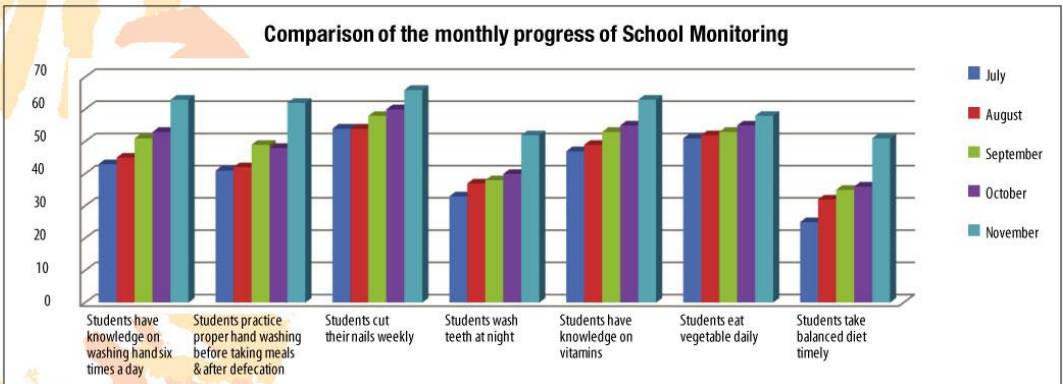
Although still germinating, the project has experienced a diversity of achievements over its short journey of two years. One such achievement is the hype, interest and support that it has been able to create within local institutions and support systems. This is essential to ensuring long term sustainability of the project. Seeing positive outcomes, the SMCs have extended their support to the fullest extent. Teachers use learning from this new curriculum to facilitate improved understanding of other subjects. Upazila Primary Education officers, Upazila Health Officers, Upazila Agriculture Officers pay frequent visits to the participating schools to monitor activities voluntarily and communicate their valuable feedback. It is believed that through continuous expert facilitation the project will likely be successful in mainstreaming major activities of project activities into school curriculums, with planning and resource allocation support from the local government.



Mukti Khatoon is pursuing a BBS degree in Azizul Haque College. She is an instructor at Buruj Primary School. She had always been the top student in her class but her poor father could not manage to send her to college. While in high school, she used to take health and hygiene classes of CARE at Buruj Primary School. Seeing her interest in teaching and her facilitation skills, the authorities of the school hired her as a part time teacher. Now, Mukti is now a capable teacher, who enjoys imparting health, hygiene and nutrition education to children and mothers. She is now able to stand on her own feet from income she gets facilitating classes. She is studying herself and is also making her younger sister study. Mukti's family now consumes balanced meals throughout the day. She is now very conscious about health and hygiene and wears clean clothes. She saved money and bought a goat worth BDT 2100. She even bought a cell phone and is currently organically learning English while using the project's school and household monitoring tool. She has finally found a voice for herself and she is thankful to the project for giving her the confidence to start afresh in life, with renewed purpose.

## Behavior change:

The participant students and their mothers have learned many things about health, hygiene and nutrition, previously unknown to them. HN&FS project has been making significant inroads into stimulating changes in the hygiene and food intake behavior of children and their families. The changes have been documented in a structured way since June 2011. Children are now exhibiting regular attendance in classes, are wearing cleaner shirts, falling ill less frequently than previous times, reporting greater interest in studies, demonstrating clean living, so on and so forth. Mothers too are learning how to practice healthy living and have reportedly made it a part of their family living as well. There are clear indications that the overall health, hygiene and nutrition status of children are showing signs of gradual improvement each day. Additionally, families have also been found to replicate school gardens in their own homes, making extra efforts and investments to grow and sell nutritious food, trying to improve their food security conditions.



# Replication of Project Activities:

One encouraging success of the project has been the organic replication of project activities that it has been stimulating. There are a range of stakeholders from communities who are either already replicating, or are on the verge of replicating activities to some extent or the other. For instance, Khanpur Government High School under Sherpur Upazila, which is situated within the same compound as Khanpur Government Primary School, has expressed interest to start similar activities for their students and their families. A number of families are already developing homestead gardens in their own homes. Additionally, families in the community, who are not a part of the project, have expressed keen interest to develop homestead gardens, realizing the benefits of the same. Furthermore, local organizations have been replicating homestead gardens in communities where they are functional. Finally, organizations such as Kite Academy Bangladesh, that provide innovative curriculums to foster early childhood care and development, are now already in the process of adding significant value to the project's overall cause- CARE is exploring these relationships.

## Challenges:

Not surprisingly, the highly new and innovative nature of the project meant that, while it had the promise of fostering incremental and positive changes in society, it had also to face a number of challenges. Some of the most pressing ones are listed below:

- Sustainable mechanisms to ensure long term continuation of project activities need to be developed;
- Inadequate land available to prepare school garden in few schools;
- Capacities of instructors need to be strengthened and greater incentives need to be provided to them;
- Selection of instructors, schools, and children needs to be more strategic in nature to ensure greater magnitude and scale of impact;
- The project needs to revise nutrition indicators and develop more efficient measurement and learning systems;
- SMC, PTA and teachers are not always accountable to the students for ensuring quality services and weak record keeping systems exist in schools themselves.

## Future Plan:

Much of the future effort will focus on establishing sustainable mechanisms for project activities to continue with greater and more lasting impact on children., their mothers, as well as their households. In this regard, CARE will not go for expansion in schools, but will concentrate efforts on curriculums and approaches that contribute to mainstreaming project activities within local health and education systems.

The future will also look to create opportunities for very poor families to build on their children's gardening skills learned at school and develop vegetable gardens in their own homes- which will likely help them better address food insecurity and improve household incomes. Additionally, CARE will be facilitating the development of more Large Scale Vegetable Gardens at the schools so that they can start raising funds for continuation of activities and contribute to improving the quality of education. Market based systems will be developed to ensure sustainability of these gardens. Such systems will also look to find ways to supply nutritious food, such as Grameen-Danone's Shakti Yoghurt to the families of school children, by creating demand and promoting purchasing behavior. Also the HN&FS project will develop a strong and effective learning, monitoring and evaluation system to facilitate improved recording and dissemination positive outcomes that can be shared across wider community and local government support institutions. The project will also look to partner with other organizations, such as Kite Bangladesh, who will most likely bring in a plethora of new learning, including children below primary school age, and ensure early childhood care and development in project areas.





