

Project Evaluation Series

**Evaluation of the project “Meeting the
Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH):
Strengthening the enabling environment for
food security and nutrition”**

**Project codes: GCP/BGD/059/USA and
GCP/BGD/063/EC**

Management reponse

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Rome, 2022**

Management response to the evaluation of the project “Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH): Strengthening the enabling environment for food security and nutrition”					01/2022
Evaluation recommendation	Management response Accepted, Partially accepted or Rejected	Management plan			
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Responsible unit	Time frame	Further funding required (Y or N)
Recommendation 1. Continue the collaboration with emphasis on institutional development. Continue collaboration among the MUCH stakeholders with greater focus on Bangladesh ownership and participation among the broad set of food-based stakeholders. Continued collaboration should be less focused on individual skills development and shift towards an emphasis on institutional development through promotion of formal working groups, formal policy consultation processes, and management and coordination systems. It would be ideal if both donors continued support. It is essential for the FAO to stay centrally engaged in technical and institutional development for FSN. The FPMU can remain a central partner but must accept a broader coalition of policy and programming units related to food production, processing, and utilisation in the other ministries also benefiting from capacity	Accepted	The following measures have been / are being taken: i. Following the technical support of MUCH in the development of a comprehensive Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) Policy 2020 by FPMU, Ministry of Food in partnership with FNS related ministries, the preparation of a ten-year FNS Policy Plan of Action (PoA) has been supported. ii. As part of multi-sectoral FNS capacity strengthening, MUCH in collaboration with FPMU, BIRTAN and BNNC (covering three core sectoral ministries of food, agriculture, and health) is building capacities of DNCC and UNCC, which are the sub-national structures established by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, on the NFNSP, its PoA, Food Safety Strategic Plan, among others. iii. Implementation of selected interventions from across the five pillars of FNS Policy PoA at sub-national levels. iv. The Ministry of Food was supported to: participate in the UNFSS process through national and subnational consultations with government stakeholders, DPs, CSOs, private sector, and media; prepare a cross-sectoral Pathway Document for Food Systems Transformation to Realize Agenda 2030. v. The Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) was supported through updating the Food Safety Strategic Plan 2015 to align it with the	FAO Bangladesh	Ongoing	Yes

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development and technical support opportunities.		National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2020 and current national priorities. vi. Ongoing support to BFSa includes building institutional capacities to (a) implement the Food Safety Act, (b) Food Safety Strategic Plan, and (c) harmonizing food safety standards in Bangladesh.			
Recommendation 2. Support subnational capacity development through line ministries with programmes and tools. Move beyond policy awareness building and support multi-pronged efforts: training on nutrition-related services, support to planning, monitoring and reporting for each sector distinctly, support to collaboration among all nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific actors. FAO should continue the partnership with BIRTAN and add additional trainers. Subnational stakeholders suggested regional trainer pools, this should be explored with appropriate Government agencies. Apply cross-training opportunities, building on the successes and expertise of the European Union-supported subnational nutrition projects within the Programme for	Accepted	Beginning Jan 2021, subnational capacity development through line ministries is being undertaken as underlined below: i. Actions initiated in 2020 to implement the FNS policy at the subnational level are continuing with the utilization of FAO supported FNS policy tools, notably, dietary guidelines, Food Composition Tables, Improved Complementary Feeding Recipes, as examples ii. The long-standing FAO partnership with BIRTAN is being continued to extend technical support and impart training at subnational levels covering all Districts and Upazilas, and pilot school nutrition interventions in selected nutritionally vulnerable districts identified as chronically food insecure under the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). iii. European Union-supported FNS projects will be integral to this partnership to draw upon lessons and share best practices from the field. iv. BFSa technical staff imparted training on food safety to the staff of Department of Livestock Services (Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock) drawn from national and subnational levels.	FAO Bangladesh	Ongoing	Yes

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Improved Nutrition, by bringing regions together in coordinated exchange sessions.					
Recommendation 3. Directly address the need for improved multi-sector collaboration by working towards a formalised nutrition-sensitive (sub) sector collaboration mechanism. This should include the FAO providing capacity development and technical support to a sub-set of food-based agencies—ideally in a formalised Government-established food-based nutrition working group building on the thematic groups—and then supporting these to engage collectively with the BNNC (this is explicitly called for in the NPAN). This will play to FAO strengths and sector interests and promote balance among the broad nutrition stakeholders (separate support should be designed for the BNNC).	Accepted	Technical contribution to BNNC/Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and support to FPMU that works as part of a multi sectoral team in preparation of the Annual NPAN2 Monitoring Report, to lead the analysis of nutrition sensitive interventions and food security relevant indicators FAO input to the ‘food component’ of the 10-year Joint UN Global Action Plan (GAP) Strategy for Reduction of Wasting to which Bangladesh is a signatory	FAO Bangladesh	Ongoing with technical support from FAO-MUCH until March 2022	Yes
Recommendation 4a. Enhance engagement with social protection policy and	Accepted	Objective 4 of the FNS Policy and its PoA includes nutrition sensitive social protection interventions that are being technically supported by different	FAO Bangladesh; it is envisaged that FPMU together with	Ongoing; some of the agreed actions are expected to be	Yes

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<p>programming by continuing support for policy-research dialogue, liaising with key partners nationally, including the WFP, and ensuring food-based solutions remain central. FAO and the food-related ministries should be consistently active in policy and programming dialogue to ensure links between social protection programmes and local food systems.</p> <p>Recommendation 4b.</p> <p>Support localised research for policy efforts by building research convening capacity within central Government ministries— emphasise that advisors only advise, while the FPMU (or other appropriate agency) take the lead. Research agencies—the universities and even private research institutes—should continue to implement the research commissioned by the ministries. Stronger dialogue leading up to research should involve national leading researchers from the universities in a more strategic, less transactional partnership. Government ministry leaders</p>		<p>ministries, agencies including WFP and other UN partners and DPs.</p> <p>FAO provided support as part of a larger technical team facilitated by BNNC to review national social protection programmes, especially the nutrition sensitive safety nets from food and agriculture sectors. FAO liaised and collaborated with WFP and other UN partners in this regard.</p> <p>Technical support for policy research has been provided alongwith strengthening the convening capacity of FPMU. Following the dissemination of research outcomes at national level, policy consideration and uptake of the research recommendations is underway (e.g. incorporation of a set of core integrated nutrition messages in school textbooks, methodology for prevention of Food Losses and Waste, consideration of nutrient density scores for healthy food baskets).</p> <p>Efforts are underway to disseminate the research outcomes at subnational levels with due consideration of the linkages of research outcomes to actions for implementation.</p> <p>Following a training needs assessment of FPMU staff, workshops have been planned to support FPMU to independently design, undertake, and monitor field research.</p>	the institutions that undertook the research studies to this effect, will continue follow-up of research recommendations to strengthen and implement policy actions.	completed by March 2022 as part of the PoA implementation.	

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need to be seen as the convenors of research, research agencies as the implementors and co-designers, and the FAO and IFPRI as the technical advisors. Government funds are increasing, but there will be continued need for donor support to ensure important policy elements are fully developed.					
Recommendation 5. Elevate gender analysis and promote gender equality and women’s empowerment as a central element of all work. FAO RAP gender experts should be consulted. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs should become a stronger partner, including at subnational levels. Involving civil society—especially the European Union-supported projects—in national continuous dialogue on elevating and supporting women’s role in nutrition and leadership is essential. Incorporating gender equality as central dialogue focuses within national FSN dialogue mechanisms is important.	Accepted	Gender related analysis in the development and monitoring of FNS policies has been included alongwith analysis of FNS expenditure across ministries using a gender lens. Gender mainstreaming is an Area of Intervention under Objective 5 of the FNS Policy PoA. Partnership with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs will continue to be strengthened; alongwith engagement of European Union partners in the policy development and implementation process.	FAO Bangladesh	Ongoing	Yes

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Recommendation 6. Simplify and strengthen programme governance. If programme governance is to be based around the sector, then it should not be limited to one donor’s projects but should rather work within a nationalised mechanism. If it is to be limited to specific projects, it should not be sectoral, but just deal with one project. Either will work; the experience of MUCH showed that the hybrid did not work well.	Partially accepted It is well acknowledged that donor supported projects should not be seen in isolation but within a boader scope of cross-sectoral FNS programing within the complex policy architecture that prevails. While cross-sectoral policy development and monitoring through partnership of the Ministries of Health and Food have been successful, challenges remain with regard to cross-sectoral delivery. The proposed hybrid model needs to be considered with due flexibility for sectoral implementation in the case of selected nutrition interventions, given the fixed mandates and allocation of business of individual ministries. Implementing the hybrid model to cover a	The cross/multisectoral model supported by MUCH and linkages established with government training and research institutions, as well as the PoA implementation initiated at government sub national level structures will serve to offer continued opportunities and entry points for strengthening multi sectoral nutrition governance.			

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	wider range of ministries as well as strengthening the engagement of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries & Livestock and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, needs to continue over an extended period, in order to be institutionalised.				
Recommendation 7. FAO needs to streamline HR processes to be able to mobilise strong TA and manage the teams well to provide continuous support for the duration of projects (MUCH found good people, but did so slowly, and then undermined their work with temporary consulting contracts).	Accepted	Timely processes for selection and recruitment of professional technical staff are of critical importance for FAO as a technical UN agency.	FAO Bangladesh	In the event of a new technical support project, operationalisation of CIP3 (2021-2025), for which work is underway with MUCH support, is seen as an imminent need, as also expressed by the government.	Yes
Recommendation 8. Deal with ongoing controversy about per-diem, salary top-ups, or other vested interests directly,	Accepted	Engage government staff as key trainers in training and capacity building programmes Deputation of government staff to support FNS work in cross-sectoral entities, departments of	FAO Bangladesh in consultation with the concerned ministry and the donor.	Provisions will need to be accordingly made while designing	Yes

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through high-level discussion and devise culturally-appropriate solutions that are acceptable (even if not ideal) to all partners. Then implement the solutions transparently. This will allow greater trust of all partners and will also allow greater transfer of ownership to local partners. This needs commitment from all sides of the collaboration: donors need to adapt while emphasizing accountability and performance, Government needs to capitalise on donor support and technical assistance to fortify its own accountability and result-oriented management, and the FAO needs to strengthen best service management practices while strongly implementing the Paris Accords’ spirit of promoting national ownership.		ministries with technical and financial support from FAO projects. To this end, FNS focal points across ministries and related institutions will need to be continually strengthened.		and implementing future projects.	
Recommendation 9. Enhance national ownership of the process by adjusting the modality: utilise more grants to Government and other actors to carry out parts of the project; align grants with national and sector interests through high-	Partially accepted Measures were taken to institute national ownership and engage national partners in the research grant process through committees and task teams	Linked to the research process supported by MUCH, technical guidance is being further provided to FPMU to enhance their capacity to design and undertake independent research.	FAO Bangladesh	Ongoing	Yes

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level dialogue; ensure TA have sufficient time in their work plans to support local technical officers to carry out the work rather than rushing through and doing the work themselves. This is the work of all stakeholders.	representing multiple ministries. The research grant process was delayed due to factors of bureaucracy at multiple levels. This was compounded by the onset of COVID-19 in early 2020, which delayed the implementation of research. Measures were proactively undertaken to mitigate the risks, and outputs were produced which were peer-reviewed by experts and validated at a National Workshop.				

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