

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. –Funded Study Shows True Cost of Malnutrition in Bangladesh

Dhaka, June 25, 2012 - Today the U.S. Government, through its principal development agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Government of Bangladesh jointly unveiled results of a study showing that malnutrition in Bangladesh causes deaths of thousands of mothers and children and limits the educational potential of Bangladeshi youth. The true cost of malnutrition for Bangladesh is more than 7,000 Crore Taka (\$1 billion USD) in lost economic productivity each year.

In a meeting with the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, USAID unveiled two new studies to help guide investments in nutrition. PROFILES, a statistical tool, estimates the consequences of poor nutrition on development outcomes such as mortality, disability, and economic productivity. PROFILES also can estimate the benefits of improved nutrition in terms of lives saved and gains in economic productivity. A second cost model estimates the cost of providing maternal and child nutrition services at scale in Bangladesh. Both studies used a consensus-building consultative process with key stakeholders including the Government of Bangladesh and nongovernmental organizations to generate the results.

The results show that for the period 2011-2021, increased investment in proven, effective nutrition interventions implemented at scale would save the lives of more than 200,000 children in Bangladesh. The cost of providing effective nutrition services at scale is estimated in the range of 900 to 1,200 Crore Taka per year (US \$130 to \$170 million), which is only 11 percent of the total amount budgeted for the Health, Population and Nutrition sector. According to the study, the net benefit of these investments in nutrition in terms of increased economic productivity alone will exceed 70,000 Crore Taka (US \$10 billion) by 2021.

In a statement during the dissemination meeting, USAID Bangladesh Mission Director Richard Greene noted that the goal of the study dissemination is to enable stakeholders from across government sectors to gain a better understanding of the long-term consequences of malnutrition and the resources required to reduce malnutrition in Bangladesh. He also emphasized the need to allocate necessary resources for implementing proven nutrition interventions at scale and across sectors, and champion nutrition at national, regional and district levels.

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The studies were completed by the USAID Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project III (FANTA), implemented by FHI 360 and Research, Training, and Management International (RTM).

For more information and full results from the Bangladesh PROFILES and Costing model, visit www.fantaproject.org. The U.S. Government, through USAID, has provided over \$5.8 billion in development assistance to Bangladesh since 1971. In 2011 alone, USAID provided more than \$180 million to improve the lives of people in Bangladesh. USAID supports programs in Bangladesh that: promote democratic institutions and practices; expand food security and economic opportunity; improve health and education services; and increase resiliency to climate change through adaptation and low carbon development.

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