



INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR THE POOREST

EMPOWERING POOR MOTHERS TO IMPROVE CHILD NUTRITION

BASIC INFORMATION

APPROVAL DATE:
**December 16
2014**

END DATE:
**June 30
2020**

TOTAL COMMITMENT:
\$300 million

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY
Local Government Division

OVERVIEW

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in reducing poverty over the past two decades. Yet, the country is among the 10 countries with the highest prevalence of malnutrition. About 31 percent of children under five are stunted. The children from poor households bear a disproportionate burden of stunted growth. Ensuring nutrition prenatally and in the early years helps to maximize a child's brain development and growth and is critical to boost the earnings capacity in the later years of life and to prevent the transmission of poverty across generations.

The **Income Support Program for the Poorest (ISPP) Project**—also known as the Jawtno Program—initiated a cash benefits program for the poorest mothers and pregnant women in exchange for their participation in activities to improve their children's nutrition and cognitive development. ISPP is built upon the success of the pilot Shombhob, which found that beneficiary households experienced an increase in consumption of nutritious foods and children's health outcomes when cash transfers were linked to the use of growth monitoring and nutritional counseling services.

The project will benefit 10 percent of the poorest households across 43 of poor Upazilas with high child malnutrition rates.

VOICES

I have my own post office cash card and am very happy to receive payment with which I can act on the knowledge I learn at my community clinic sessions to improve health and nutrition of my children..

SHEFALI BEGUM
Project beneficiary, Bhurungamari

CHALLENGE

Well-designed safety net programs can improve child health and nutrition outcomes, while contributing to poverty reduction goals. The Government of Bangladesh currently spends over 14 percent of its budget on over 100 safety net programs. But only a small portion of this budget supports programs that aim to improve maternal and child nutrition and cognitive development. Most safety net programs are implemented by Union Parishads, which face administrative capacity issues and operate with limited budgets. At the same time, the numerous line ministries responsible for the various safety nets do not systematically coordinate implementation efforts at the local level. Given this situation, setting up common administrative platforms at the local level for safety net beneficiary identification, enrolment, and payment can enhance implementation capacity in safety net delivery.

APPROACH

The ISPP Project provides income support to the poorest mothers based on their uptake of services aimed at improving their children's nutrition and cognitive development. Pregnant women and mothers of children below five years from poor households will be eligible for social assistance under the project. The beneficiary mothers and pregnant women will receive quarterly electronic cash transfers for utilizing services related to their children's health and development, including antenatal care visits, child growth monitoring and early learning activities for children under the age of five at the community clinics. The project also helps improve the coordination among safety net programs at the local level by building common administrative and service delivery platforms, in partnership with the Directorate General of Health Services, the Postal Directorate, and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

TOWARDS THE FUTURE

As part of building and protecting human capital from the early years, the Government is designing the nationwide Child Benefit Scheme: the ISPP Project provides demonstrative value on the design, implementation and impact of this critical investment.



EXPECTED RESULTS

600,000 poorest mothers to receive cash transfers

2.7 million poor people across **43** upazilas in northern Bangladesh to benefit

Improved capacity of local level government to deliver safety net programs

