

BANGLADESH

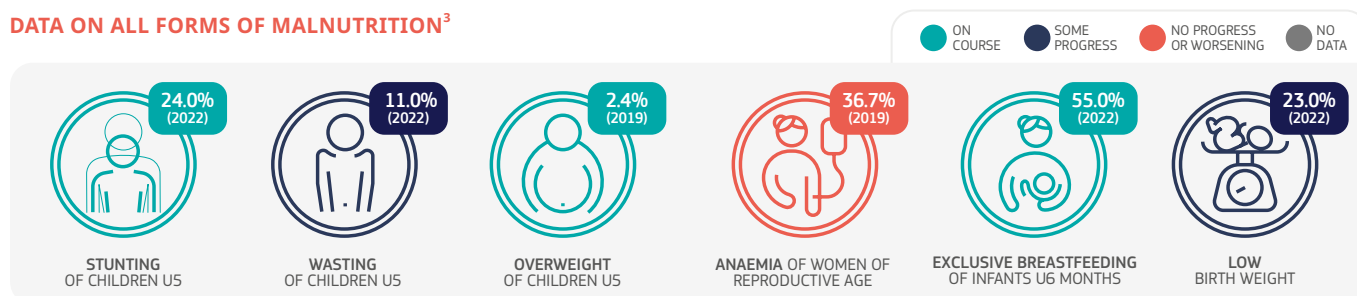
Nutrition situation in Bangladesh

AT A GLANCE

The population of Bangladesh is currently estimated at around 174 million people¹, with around 40% located in urban areas. The country has made progress in meeting several global nutrition targets, with a reduction in stunting from 28% in 2019 to 24% in 2022, although prevalence of low birth weight, wasting in children under 5 and anaemia in women of reproductive age are off track to meet World Health Assembly (WHA) targets. Just over one in 10 of the children suffer from wasting, a form of undernutrition associated with weakened immunity and increased risk of death. Undernutrition disproportionately affects the poor, due to socio-economic inequalities

and a generally low-quality diet. It undermines a child's physical and cognitive development and so has lifelong consequences including a greater risk of chronic diseases later in life. While over a third of women of reproductive age are anaemic, the national prevalence of adult overweight and obesity continues to rise. The economic cost of undernutrition alone is estimated to exceed USD 1 billion per year in Bangladesh. Gender equality has improved in Bangladesh but inequalities persist, for example in education and employment. Bangladesh has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.498 and is ranked at 127 out of 166 countries in 2022².

DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION³



The data reported in the 2023 EU Nutrition Country Profiles is drawn from the UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates and the Global Nutrition Report (GNR).

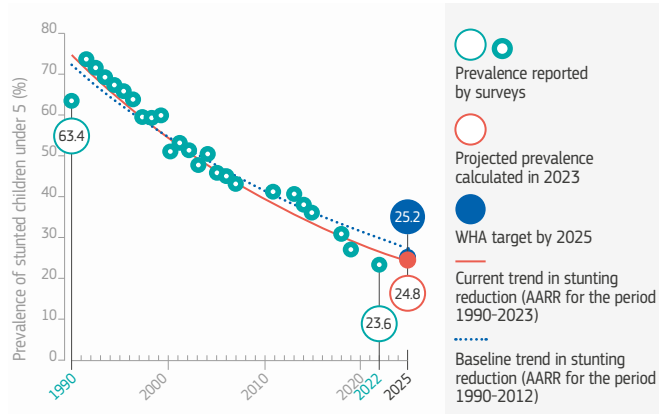
NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

- Bangladesh joined the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement in 2012.
- Implementation of the 2015 National Nutrition Policy was boosted through the government's second national plan of action for nutrition (NPAN2 2016-2025). Drafting of NPAN 3 has commenced and will strengthen governance and the multisectoral approach to nutrition.
- Annual sectoral nutrition workplans with activities and budget for 22 ministries are in place.
- A central mechanism to track budgets for each line ministry against workplans was launched, but requires more effort for the dissemination and utilisation of the system by relevant ministries and departments.
- The establishment of decentralised multisectoral nutrition committees (Upazila Nutrition Coordination Committees – UNCC, and District Nutrition Coordination Committees – DNCC) has improved sub-national coordination.
- Lead by the SUN Secretariat, Cabinet Division helped to operationalise 12 Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit commitments (2021).
- Country priorities for nutrition include the development of a Nutrition Investment Case, costing of an Essential Service Package and updating of the National Nutrition Policy.
- Since 2017, the Government has provided fortified rice to 81 sub-districts to address micronutrient deficiencies, through various social safety net programmes (SSNPs). In 2023, the Ministry of Food scaled up fortified rice distribution through two of the largest SSNPs in Bangladesh (the Vulnerable Women Benefit Programme and the Food Friendly Programme).

Example of EU support

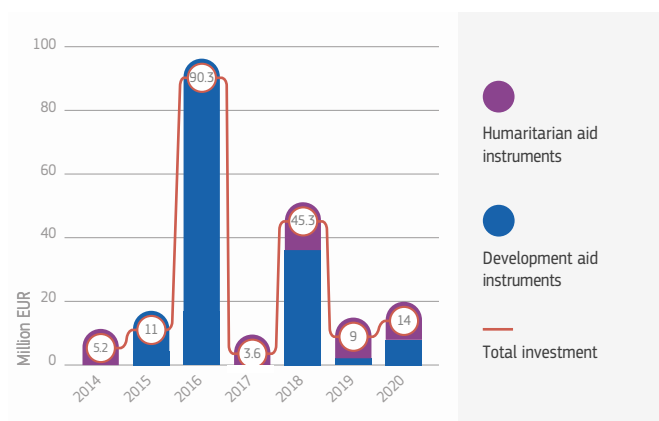
SUCHANA, a EUR 53.8 million programme, ended in December 2023. This flagship nutrition programme aimed to reduce the prevalence of stunting in children under two in two districts of Sylhet Division (with the highest stunting and wasting prevalence in Bangladesh). Jointly supported by the EU and UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and implemented by a consortium of NGOs led by Save the Children, the programme demonstrated that a multisectoral approach is effective in addressing the multi-faceted causes of malnutrition. The programme engaged closely with eight ministries, to strengthen delivery systems and improve access to key nutrition-related services. The intervention: i) supported the targeted households with income-generating activities, homestead gardening and health and nutrition awareness; ii) enabled them to cope with climatic, health and economic shocks by increasing access to social protection schemes, and iii) improved nutrition governance across the country. The programme established strong ties with national and subnational authorities, to promote scaling up of best practices from SUCHANA and ensure the sustainability of its outcomes.

Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



TREND, PROJECTION AND TARGETS IN THE PREVALENCE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN (U5) STUNTED

The Government of Bangladesh has committed, through the national plan of action for nutrition, to reduce stunting to 25% by 2025. Bangladesh has experienced a steady decline in the prevalence of stunting since the 1990s and the number of stunted children has halved. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted accelerated from 2.75% in 2012 to 3% in 2019 and 2022, and the country is now projected to meet both the government target and the World Health Assembly (WHA) target of 25% stunting prevalence by 2025.



EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2020 – A TOTAL OF EUR 175.4 MILLION

EU nutrition commitments from 2014 to 2020 include EUR 34 million in humanitarian assistance. The Food and Nutrition Security Programme for Bangladesh (2015) is the ongoing nutrition investment at EUR 85 million. The core of this programme is the strengthening of nutrition governance and multisectoral approach to nutrition, through a set of seven actions, the last of which will be completed by June 2024. In 2018, the EU allocated EUR 130 million to support the government's national social security strategy (estimated EUR 33 million allocated for nutrition). In 2019 and 2020 EU nutrition-related finance was targeted to the Rohingya refugee population. Between 2021 and 2022, the EU invested EUR 33.6 million in humanitarian nutrition assistance for refugees and host communities.

Planning for Nutrition 2021-2027

For the UN [Food Systems Summit](#) in 2021, Bangladesh developed a Strategic National Pathway Document ([version 15.09.2021](#)), which committed to address malnutrition, prioritising early detection and treatment of wasting, increasing the number of infants born safely, implementing its National School Meal Policy, emphasising food fortification through a range of policies. At the [Tokyo Nutrition for Growth \(N4G\) Summit](#) in 2021, and as noted in the [N4G Compact](#) and its [Annex](#), the government of Bangladesh committed among other to reduce childhood stunting among 750 000 children under 5 years of age in both urban and rural areas, focusing on gender and equity from 31% in 2017-18 to 25% by 2025.

Bangladesh is uniquely vulnerable to climate change, with two-thirds of the country less than five metres above sea level. A climate smart and resilient agricultural sector is a key priority for Bangladesh under its National Adaptation Plan and thus for any comprehensive climate strategy for the country.

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The proposed Team Europe Initiative⁴ in the area of green energy transition in Bangladesh may offer an opportunity to address the above concerns, as a component of disaster preparedness investment and planning. The framework of the Commission's Farm to Fork strategy and the proposed Team Europe Initiative in the area of decent work also represent significant opportunities to improve nutrition as a fundamental human right and the foundation for wellbeing. These include investment in more equitable and sustainable food systems, harnessing a gender transformative approach to promote healthy diets, creation of jobs for young people, improving women's access to skills development and participation in the labour force, improving the position of small farmers in value chains and leveraging private sector partnerships.

The consolidation of the ongoing budget support programme for social security and the proposed Team Europe Initiative⁵ in the area of decent work also provide future opportunities regarding social protection as a tool to promote human development and address multidimensional inequalities. The provision of regular and predictable social protection to people who are vulnerable to multiple risks (including those affected by climate change and ecological challenges) is an opportunity to empower women and build resilience while preventing people from falling into poverty and reducing the need to resort to coping strategies. When effectively designed to be nutrition-sensitive, social protection enable the acceleration of progress towards ending malnutrition by improving diets, increasing access to public services such as health and education, improving care practices and increasing or stabilising household income.

1 - [UNDESA World Population Prospects](#)

2 - [UNDP Gender Inequality Index](#)

3 - NB Progress rates for wasting and exclusive breastfeeding refer to previous data (2019). Wasting rates have worsened and exclusive breastfeeding rates have declined since 2019. The WHO will update progress rate tracking at the end of 2024.

4 - With Germany, Denmark, France, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and like-minded donors like Switzerland and Norway.

5 - With Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland.