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Food-based Approaches for Improving Diets and Raising Levels of Nutrition



ADAPTING FOOD-BASED STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE NUTRITION OF THE LANDLESS: A REVIEW OF HKI'S HOMESTEAD FOOD PRODUCTION PROGRAM IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract

Helen Keller International's (HKI) homestead food production (HFP) model is a food-based strategy to increase the micronutrient intake of individuals, improve household food security, and advance women's empowerment. The standard HFP intervention includes gardening, poultry production, group marketing, and nutrition behaviour change communication (BCC). The model has historically been implemented with smallholder households that have a minimal amount of land. However, individuals in ultra-poor households with minimal land access are among the most food-insecure and malnourished in Bangladesh and they require food-based interventions targeted to their unique capabilities. Recognizing the urgent nutritional needs of the growing number of landless households in Bangladesh, HKI has been adapting its HFP model to reach this marginalized population.

Targeting HFP to the landless, ultra-poor households in Bangladesh requires modification of the HFP package of support to focus on technologies that maximize yields and promote nutritionally rich varieties that can be produced on microplots. Given their limited production capacity and immediate income needs, interventions for the ultra-poor should also include skill-building and income earning opportunities that are linked to agricultural production. Along with improving incomes or agriculture skills to improve access to food, providing nutrition education and counselling is essential for improving nutrition outcomes.

Using available literature and datasets from HKI's 20-year history of HFP in Bangladesh, this paper briefly reviews evidence of HFP's nutritional impact on the land-constrained, summarizes programmatic challenges to working with this group, and proposes modifications to ensure that the most marginalized can derive equitable nutrition benefits from this food-based intervention.

Key words: ultra-poor; landless; Bangladesh; dietary diversification; homestead food production

