



World Food Programme

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LIVES

# WFP Bangladesh

## Draft Country Strategic Plan 2022-2026

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP extended its first Bangladesh country strategic plan (CSP 1) for one year. **WFP will submit its second Bangladesh CSP (CSP 2)** for Executive Board approval in November 2021, aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Bangladesh, 2022-2026.

### SITUATION IN BANGLADESH

**Bangladesh has made significant progress towards Zero Hunger.** The country has achieved self-sufficiency in production of rice, meat and fish and is on track to meet targets for the reduction of stunting and wasting. The country was among the fastest-growing economies prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 8.2 percent in 2019, but projected GDP growth of only 5.1 percent in 2022. Bangladesh will graduate from Least Developed Country status during CSP 2.

**Despite remarkable progress, malnutrition remains a serious concern.** Bangladesh faces a growing triple burden of malnutrition, with decreasing, but still high stunting and wasting rates (28 and 10 percent respectively), high prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies (anaemia in women of reproductive age at 33 percent and 40 percent among pregnant women) and steeply increasing rates of adult overweight and obesity. Inequality is growing in the country, which translates into unequal ability to afford diverse diets. About 1 in 8 Bangladeshi households could not afford a healthy, nutritious diet prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although there has been significant progress towards gender equality, as evident in women's participation in the garment industry, progressive legislation and policy and parity in primary education, **girls and women continue to face discrimination at various levels.** High rates of violence against women and girls, early marriage of girls and boys, lack of economic empowerment and low secondary educational attainment are major concerns. Gender inequality affects the food security and nutrition of women and girls in multiple ways, including inequitable access to food and other resources and low participation in decision making within families. The intractable practice of early marriage accompanied by early pregnancy and poor maternal nutrition status perpetuates an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.

**The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are a source of concern, with anticipated increases in poverty, inequality, early marriage and malnutrition.** The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the urban poor who bore the brunt of economic restrictions in the absence of social safety net mechanisms able to respond to these kinds of shocks rapidly and at scale. Estimates indicate that 12 million "new poor" have slipped into poverty. The COVID-19 shock occurs in the context of severe climate-induced shocks, including historic flooding and cyclones, which call for urgent climate action. Shock-responsive social protection is increasingly recognized as a crucial intervention to help to meet these challenges.

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**The Government of Bangladesh has made high-level policy and fiscal commitments to address these issues.** Focusing on sustained economic growth, the 8th Five Year Plan presents the policy directions for recovering from the pandemic, reducing inequalities and promoting an inclusive society. The Government's continued commitment to disaster management, increased focus on shock-responsive social protection, as well as an increase in the social protection budget target to 2 percent of GDP (up from 1.2 percent in the 7th Plan) are key considerations for the development of CSP 2.

**The Rohingya refugee crisis remains a concern.** WFP enables 884,000 refugees to purchase food, using e-vouchers, from contracted Bangladeshi retailers in the camps. This assistance injects upwards of USD 10 million per month into the economy. Efforts to directly connect local farmers with refugees to sell fresh produce have been introduced through "fresh food corners". Win-win solutions like these help diversify diets of the refugees and contribute towards mutually beneficial solutions for refugees and Bangladeshi communities.

**Despite these developments, food insecurity and economic vulnerability in Cox's Bazar slightly increased in 2020 as compared to 2019.** In the WFP Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA 4), both Rohingya and Bangladeshis in Cox's Bazar cited food as their highest priority need. Without assistance, 96 percent of Rohingya would be unable to meet basic needs (up from 92 percent in 2019). COVID-19 may be partially to blame: the pandemic limited access to markets and self-reliance opportunities. Overall, the situation reflects a continued need for assistance.



**96% of refugees would be unable to meet basic needs without assistance**

**884,000**

**Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar District**



Relocation of a portion of the refugee population to Bhashan Char, an island in the Bay of Bengal, is ongoing. Any United Nations engagement in this process may result in changes to the planning assumptions and risk landscape captured in the draft CSP.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM CSP 1

The three strategic recommendations made by the evaluation of CSP 1 (2017-2021) are addressed in CSP 2:

**1. Enhance strategic partnerships.** The CSP 2 design benefits from strong engagement with key stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Immediate Socio-Economic Response Plan (ISERP) for the COVID-19 crisis, 2020-2021. As a member of the United Nations Country Team, WFP has also closely engaged in the formulation of the UNSDCF. WFP continues to play a leading role in the refugee response under the umbrella of the annual Joint Response Plans. These humanitarian and development coordination processes provide a strong basis for the positioning of WFP. The design process incorporated a Theory of Change exercise.

**2. Improve the effectiveness of emergency preparedness, readiness, and response mechanisms.** The CSP 2 design includes a contingency for emergency responses that would draw upon existing human resources, gender and disability inclusion practices, partnerships with Government and civil society and new anticipatory action approaches. Overall, CSP 2 reflects an enhanced focus on shock-responsive social protection—an area of rapid development and new interest following the COVID-19 pandemic.

**3. Strengthen support for nutrition-sensitive social safety net programmes.** WFP has a strong track record in supporting nutrition-sensitive and gender sensitive safety net programmes in Bangladesh. The CSP 2 design consolidates and refines the strategic direction of this work with elements of shock-responsiveness and expanded urban coverage. These approaches build on strategic and operational successes with urban social safety net programmes deployed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the use of new digital solutions to track purchase patterns, behaviour change communication (BCC) and cash incentives to promote healthy diets.

These strategic actions are complemented by action on the operational recommendations on **capacity strengthening, gender equality and social inclusion and performance management.**

**Photo page 1:** © WFP/Sayed Asif Mahmud

*Women farmers in Cox's Bazar. These participants in a WFP livelihoods programme sell their surplus produce at Farmers' Markets in the refugee camps.*

# Country Strategic Plan 2022-2026

CSP 2 has a consolidated, refined strategic direction delivered through four **strategic outcomes**, each with one consolidated Activity to reduce transaction costs and allow greater flexibility.

Through CSP 2, WFP contributes directly to two Strategic Priorities of the UNSDCF: **Equitable Human Development and Well-Being** and **Sustainable, Healthy and Resilient Environment**. Gender and protection considerations are reflected across all CSP strategic outcomes, in line with the Strategic Priority on gender, which is also cross-cutting in the UNSDCF.

WFP will adopt **country capacity strengthening, nutrition, digital innovation** and **food systems** as cross-cutting themes in CSP 2.

## STRATEGIC OUTCOME 1 REFUGEE OPERATION AND CRISIS RESPONSE. US\$ 1.38 BILLION

The refugee crisis remains a serious concern. The Rohingya refugees require assistance to meet their basic needs. Although service delivery and the camp environment have improved since 2017, the camps remain exposed to natural hazards including cyclones, landslides and fire.

**WFP will continue efforts to improve delivery of food assistance to the camps** including through the use of blockchain-based technology for better management of entitlements and introduction of a diverse portfolio of self-reliance activities to stabilize and maintain the gains in food and nutrition security made to date. In Bangladeshi communities in the vicinity, WFP will continue a portfolio of interventions to support nutrition, livelihoods and resilience.

Cash transfers towards the refugees remains limited due to the policy landscape, but self-reliance programmes for portable skills training, disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes and a World Bank-funded community workfare and services project all provide opportunities for cash programming at a limited scale, with an aim to improve dietary diversity and support access to other essential non-food needs.

**As part of a medium-term, more sustainable response to support social cohesion**, WFP will continue to strengthen market linkages, bringing in local farmers and Bangladeshi retailers to deliver a fresh and diverse array of locally sourced food to support refugees' food and nutrition security.

This outcome also includes a contingency for emergency response elsewhere in Bangladesh under national leadership, should the Government request assistance.

## STRATEGIC OUTCOME 2 NUTRITION-SENSITIVE SOCIAL SAFETY NETS. US\$ 35 MILLION

WFP will provide technical support to strengthen national capacities related to **nutrition-sensitive safety net programmes** through policy and strategic engagement, enhanced multi-sectoral coordination and technical support to improve the design, implementation and monitoring of nutrition-sensitive safety net programmes. This builds on the strong track record of WFP on this in Bangladesh.

Because of the enhanced focus on a shock-responsive approach, support to some of the national safety nets programmes will be delivered through strategic outcome 3, reflected below.

The bulk of this outcome focuses on nutrition-sensitive school feeding. WFP will continue to advocate for the implementation of a school feeding programme to assist all primary and pre-primary students as per government policy. WFP, with the guidance of relevant government agencies, will support the implementation of a school feeding pilot in urban areas to explore feasible and efficient options. As indicated in the approved policy, WFP will support the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education when it establishes a national school feeding research and development centre. Advocacy for school feeding at the secondary level is envisaged, as secondary school feeding can serve as an essential entry point for improving adolescent nutrition and can delay early marriage for both girls and boys.

Building on the scale-up of national post-harvest rice fortification capacity by various government agencies to reach 8 million Bangladeshis through food-based national safety net programmes, WFP will incorporate a broadened focus on the availability and production of safe, nutritious food, including fortified food, taking targeted actions across the food system in partnership with the private sector, development partners and civil society.

WFP will also work with the private sector and smallholder farmers to improve market linkages with safety nets and urban programmes. This includes, initially, linkages between urban initiatives and fresh food supplies in Dhaka.

### STRATEGIC OUTCOME 3 RESILIENCE BUILDING AND SHOCK-RESPONSIVENESS. US\$ 47 MILLION

**WFP will continue to strengthen national capacity at all levels to support communities in enhancing their resilience to climate change and natural disasters.** A combined strategy, focusing upon expansion of social safety nets and inclusion of adaptation and resilience dimensions in selected safety nets, is expected to contribute towards enhanced resilience of vulnerable communities. The combined strategy will enable synergies across sectors and enable better use of resources. WFP will support the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in scaling up these programmes in urban areas, and engage with the Ministry of Social Welfare for the expansion of programmes for the elderly and persons with disabilities in urban areas.

**Anticipatory action, including forecast-based financing,** a success in CSP 1, will in CSP 2 see scale-up and refinement for mainstreaming in the Government's disaster response portfolio.

**These innovative actions will be complemented with systematic efforts to support capacities for disaster preparedness and response.** WFP will support the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief on emergency preparedness, emergency supply chain and institutional capacity strengthening. This includes establishment of facilities and development of strategies to help the Government manage large scale emergencies efficiently. This outcome

includes capacity strengthening for the nationally led Food Security Cluster and Logistics Cluster.

The outcome continues the high-level partnerships of WFP with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Cabinet Division and the Bangladesh National Nutrition Council to facilitate coherence across sectors.

### STRATEGIC OUTCOME 4 SERVICE DELIVERY. US\$ 154 MILLION

All mandated and on-demand services will be delivered through this outcome. In the refugee response, this includes the mandated services delivered through the Food Security Sector, the Logistics Sector and the Emergency Telecommunications Sector. On-demand engineering services will be delivered through a continuation of the Site Maintenance and Engineering Project. On-demand digital services are also envisaged, focusing on improving partners' digitization of beneficiary management and assistance delivery efforts and support harmonization of entitlements across sectors.

CSP 2 adds two additional on-demand services to contribute towards development partners' programme efficiency: vulnerability analysis services and procurement services. WFP will provide on-demand VAM services which will initially include research on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition and on the impact of climate change on resilience. If required, WFP will provide support with local procurement to support Government and other actors.

