

# Health Sector Engagement in the Nutrition in City Ecosystem (NICE) Project – A Path to Nutritious Urban Living in Dinajpur and Rangpur, Bangladesh

## **Nutrition in Secondary Cities (NICE) project coordinator:**

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**Partnering with Rangpur city corporation and Dinajpur Municipality in northwestern Bangladesh and the civil surgeon's offices in both cities as well as local healthcare providers, the Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) project empowered more than 180 health care professionals for improved knowledge and power of healthy diets and to advocate for integrating nutritional counselling into patient care.**

Particularly in the urban setting, many people currently experience a pronounced shift away from traditional staples such as rice, millet or pulses towards more convenient and often high-processed foods such as pasta, bread, or high-sugar foods. This is a result of changes in lifestyles including, but not limited to, moving out of a farming household, different relative prices for food, and often increased income, and is often not only beneficial. Malnutrition and food insecurity are highly prevalent in urban centers. In Bangladesh, 40% of the population lives in urban and peri-urban areas, and their basic needs are often unmet.

To address this, NICE operates to improve the food and nutrition security of city populations and to reduce poverty by increasing the demand and supply of healthy, diverse diets consisting of nutritious food produced using agroecological practices in its 6 current target cities in Bangladesh (Dinajpur and Rangpur), Kenya (Bungoma and Busia), and Rwanda (Rubavu and Rusizi).

In Bangladesh, NICE partners with ten health institutions (five per city) to strengthen and enhance community health. Partnering with the Rangpur City Corporation, Dinajpur Municipality, and civil surgeon's offices, Bangladesh Food Safety Authority's (BFSA), the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN), and local healthcare providers the project empowers individuals with knowledge about safe food, healthy diets, and nutrition in general.

In the first half of 2024, over 180 healthcare workers, including health assistants, medical supervisors, and vaccinators, have been trained on healthy diets and nutrition through a newly designed training module on "Food and Nutrition" combining respective materials from Bangladesh Food Safety Authority's (BFSA) 'A Family's Guide to Safe Food' alongside materials and inputs from the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN), training materials from FAO's Dhaka food system project and the civil surgeon's office.

Interactive training sessions were organized at the Rangpur City Corporation office and the Dinajpur Municipality. Dr. Kamruzzaman Ibn Taj, the Chief Health Officer of Rangpur City Corporation, served as the chief guest in Rangpur, while, the Civil Surgeon of Dinajpur, Dr. A H M Borhan ul Siddiki, served as the chief guest in Dinajpur. Eight different sessions were provided over the 2-days intense training block. Sessions covered topics such as safe food, nutrition, and agroecology and were conducted by various experts, including Civil Surgeons, Medical Officers, and Health Education Officers from the Civil Surgeon Office, Food Safety Officers from the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFS), and Principal Scientific Officer from the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN). Maksuda, a vaccinator in Dinajpur Municipality enthusiastically summarized: "Before the training, we lacked proper knowledge about nutritious food and vitamins. After attending this two-day training block, we now feel much more confident in integrating nutrition advises in our daily work and to deliver messages regarding the food intake habits of both children and adults."

The trained healthcare workers are now deployed in order to facilitate community workshops raising awareness about healthy diets in the 10 health institutions, 40 NICE's partner schools, and in 22 communities supported by NICE through strong Women and Youth groups. All these community health care workers, schools (nutrition clubs) and community groups also profited from dedicated cooking demonstrations and smart food tips sessions to further improve nutritious foods like Sobji Khichuri (Vegetable Hotchpotch) with eggs, as well as various other dishes like tomato sauce, mashed potato, tomato chutney etc.

**About the NICE project:**

SDC's Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) project is implemented by Swiss TPH, ETH-Zürich, *Sight and Life* and the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture. See: <https://www.nice-nutrition.ch>

Key publication:

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