



End of year report

2015 Project

Helen Keller International

Food and Agriculture Approaches to Reduce Malnutrition  
(FAARM)

The funds provided to your organisation for the current year by TFWA Care were donated following the approval of the TFWA Management Committee and board. Among the prerequisites for funding by TFWA Care are transparency and accountability. We would be grateful if you could send us a brief summary of the project, the objectives achieved, problems encountered, impact on the local community and indicators of the project's success. We will share the report with the Management Committee at the end of year meeting.

Please do not hesitate to report on the project's successes as well as any aspects that did not go according to plan. This serves to provide a greater understanding of the challenges and issues encountered by the communities on whose behalf your organisation is working. Any quantifiable indicators will also be helpful in your report.

Thank you.



## Project details

1. Please summarise in a few words the project supported by TFWA CARE, including the principle objectives and duration.

Food and Agriculture Approaches to Reduce Malnutrition (FAARM) is a five year project with the goal of improving the nutritional status of infants and young children in the program area through an intervention focused primarily on HKI's homestead food production (HFP) model. Implementation activities for this project are funded by TFWA, Carrefour Foundation, BestinBrands Pte Ltd (corporation based in Singapore and Lorience Asia partner) and the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) through Heidelberg University. The project includes intensive skill-building in agricultural production, poultry rearing, and marketing, accompanied by transfer of productive assets and nutrition education. The skill building focuses on improved food production techniques such as integrated pest management, organic fertilizer, and intercropping, as well as poultry rearing techniques such as the use of improved poultry sheds and creep feeding. The project also works with communities to establish marketing groups, through which project participants work together to sell their surplus produce.

The project is implemented in Nabiganj and Baniachang Upazila under Habiganj District, Sylhet Division, Bangladesh. The Voluntary Association for Rural Development (VARD) is the implementing organization working with 1 200 young women in 48 settlements. According to a baseline survey in 2015, settlements were randomized into 48 intervention and 48 control settlements. Women in the intervention settlements receive training and support in Homestead Food Production during project period (four years). The project will continue until 2019.

The activities and implementation strategies fall under five major components:

- HFP/gardening (homestead food and crops production to build women's asset base and food security)
- Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA), including WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) and IYCF (Infant and Young Children Feeding) strategies
- Marketing
- Poultry rearing
- Gender

The monitoring and evaluation framework of the project has identified six impact pathways to improved nutrition: food, income, child care, hygiene, health care seeking, and women's empowerment. The detailed pathways are included in the attached excel file (FARM-PMP) and a detailed indicator list is available upon request.

2. What activities were carried out within the scope of the project over the course of the year?

This is a report covering the first nine months (January-September 2015) of the Food and Agriculture Approaches to Reduce Malnutrition (FAARM) Project. The project officially started in January 2014 and HKI obtained approval from the Government of Bangladesh NGO Affairs Bureau on October 19, 2014. Full implementation of the project was officially started on August 1, 2015. All major FAARM field activities have begun and a number of new innovations have been introduced. Key achievements to date include:

- The inception workshop was conducted with health and family planning department at CS office at Habigonj district and two inception and planning workshops were also conducted at Nabigonj and Baniachang Upazila.
- Households were identified by household listing and the baseline survey team. Household data collection was conducted by research team from February 2015 to May 2015.
- Trainings have been completed for VARD and HKI staff on homestead gardening, poultry rearing, Essential Nutrition and Hygiene Actions (ENHA), gender and facilitation skill. These have included practical work with project households.
- The project has distributed five varieties of vegetable seeds to 700 households for summer/mid-summer season and eight varieties seeds for early winter season to 1 045 households.
- All groups received the first court yard session 1st round (sick child care) one session out of six sessions.

Additional details on all of these activities are given below.

2.1 Government Liaison

FAARM held a series of inception workshops with district, Upazila and union levels to establish relationships between project staff, critical government and non-government stakeholders. This formal linkage is necessary to build beneficiaries' access to formal support and services from local government, health and family



planning department, market groups, and agriculture sectors. Participants were district health and family planning department, Upazila Chairmen, Upazila Administrative Officers, Department of health and family planning (Upazila), Department of Agricultural Extension



(DAE), Department of Livestock Services (DLS), union parishad chairman, NGOs personal and other officers. The main objectives of the workshops were to:

- Share activities of FAARM project in Habigonj District
- Strengthen coordination with different departments
- Ensure sustainability of the project

FAARM partner is attending regular monthly coordination meeting at the Upazila-level and provide updates of FAARM activities.

## 2.2 Baseline survey

Data collection for the baseline survey was conducted from February 2015 to May 2015 by the research team. After the baseline survey and data collection from 2 400 beneficiaries, 98 clusters were identified. Among the clusters, 48 clusters were randomly assigned for the intervention. Women in the intervention settlements will receive training and support in Homestead Food Production (HFP) until early 2019. Baseline data includes information on pregnancies, births, child development, nutrition and infections as well as pathway indicators.

## 2.3 Partner Selection

Voluntary Association for Rural Development (VARD) was selected as the implementing partner for FAARM. This NGO has experience in implementing such type of project and is well acquainted with the working areas. Moreover, the NGO has partnered with HKI in the past. A series of meetings and consultations were held to engage them in program design and start up activities before confirming their participation through signing of formal agreements in January 2015.

## 2.4 Staff hiring and office set-up

Nine staff was recruited by VARD and 3 staff for HKI in FAARM project. Before staff hiring, advertisements were published for job recruitment in newspapers and website. HKI and VARD established the main FAARM office at Nabigonj Upazila.

## 2.5 Staff development training

After recruiting staff, FAARM provided a series of training for staff development. For agriculture, VARD staff received a field based season long training on vegetable gardening and poultry rearing. In the training, they practiced growing vegetables in the gardens applying the method learned. The team also made sample poultry sheds and hatching baskets.



Field staff facilitated a series of training at the field level, so they received basic training on facilitation and intra-personal counselling skills. Expert technical person and facilitators facilitated the training of the staff. We also provided basic training on EHNA, BCC (Behavior Change Communication) and Gender to the implementation partner NGO staff (IPNGO) and HKI staff.

After receiving the participant lists, households were verified by the program and then formed in groups. HKI taught VARD, how to do group formation, how to arrange court yard sessions, and how to conduct agriculture sessions in the groups. Participant households were visited several times by the field staff, were formed in groups through an orientation meeting and entered in regularly maintained register books.



During the orientation meeting, beneficiaries were oriented on FAARM project, its activities and why the project is important. Beneficiaries also received some vegetables seeds at the orientation meeting. Local elite person were also invited during introduction session.

In earlier years, VMFs with access to larger plots, often men, were selected. Today, HKI works through female-run VMFs, as we have found they are often best-positioned to understand women’s needs and support their learning. Additionally, despite the fact that women have a critical and growing role in agriculture in Bangladesh, women who produce food are often not recognized as ‘farmers’ in their own right. VMFs thus play an important role in promoting women’s leadership in agriculture at the community level.

Fifty-one VMFs were selected during the reporting time and the remaining 10 to 12 VMFs will be selected in the next month. FAARM provided eight varieties of vegetable seeds to the VMFs, which are rich in nutrients or requested by the participants (bottle gourd, sweet gourd, kangkong, Indian spinach, okra, yard long bean, red amaranth and green amaranth). Moreover, VMFs were also provided with some seeds for seedling production like cabbage, tomato, and aubergine. The seedlings will both be planted in the VMFs and given freely to the group members.



The VMFs play a vital role in the community, and require a significant investment on the part of the project to support this sustainable community member.

FAARM has provided eight varieties of mid-summer and early winter vegetable seeds to 1 045 households. Seeds were selected in consultation with households and the Government of Bangladesh Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE). The majority of the distribution was done within the reporting time. The seeds provided included kangkong, red amaranth, Indian spinach, yard long bean, sweet gourd, bitter gourd, ash gourd and bottle gourd. The quantity provided varied according to the land available but on average, homestead gardeners received 120 grams and VMFs received 390 grams seeds.



Nutrition behavior change activities have also begun. The FAARM project has introduced behavior change communication activities following the Essential Nutrition and Hygiene Actions (ENHA) approach, which addresses the most effective actions for reducing maternal and child mortality. Nutrition education in the FAARM Project targets selected beneficiaries. Field officers promote 7 specific nutrition actions:

1. Promotion of optimal breastfeeding during the first six months;
2. Promotion of optimal complementary feeding starting at six months with continued breastfeeding up to two years of age and beyond;
3. Promotion of optimal nutritional care of sick and severely malnourished children;
4. Prevention of vitamin A deficiency for women and children;
5. Promotion of adequate intake of iron and folic acid and prevention and control of anemia for women and children;
6. Adequate intake of iodine by all members of the household;
7. Promotion of optimal nutrition for women;
8. Appropriate hygiene practice.

Gender is an integrated component which focuses on the disparities in women's workloads and control over assets, urging other household members to take mutual responsibility for ensuring children's and mother's nutritional wellbeing.

To date, FAARM has completed sixty-two courtyard training management sessions on the



topic of sick child feeding and recovery from diarrhoea and pneumonia. In addition, individual counselling has been provided based on needs. Topics covered have included breastfeeding, complementary feeding, women's nutrition, hand washing



and tippy-tap, sick child feeding and recovery child and micronutrients (Vitamin A, iron, iodine) to pregnant and lactating women. These counselling sessions have been provided during household visit by field facilitators.

### **Evaluation**

3. Has the project been successful? Please outline the success factors for each objective as well as the challenges encountered and solutions adopted to overcome them.

The project has successfully carried out activities to date though we have not yet taken a thorough process evaluation of the project outcomes. The agricultural component of the project has begun or will shortly begin in all 1 200 households selected for the project. Initial seeds have been distributed and field worker are frequently visiting households to ensure that participants receive the support they need to successfully garden and undertake animal husbandry. For the nutrition BCC component, by the end of the year, all households will have received their first formal training and many have also received interpersonal communication from field workers. For the research component, the baseline survey has been completed, the surveillance system has begun and the project impact pathways have been fully designed. This project impact document will help us to measure project impact in the coming years and will guide the process evaluation we will undertake next year after one year of implementation.

4. Did the work accomplished this year help you learn lessons that will benefit future work?

Yes. As is the case with any new project, in the first year of activity you learn multiple ways that the project needs to course correct for success. For example, as the selected participants are very scattered geographically, we have reduced the number of participants in individual producer groups. This will have some cost implications, but should greatly improve project quality as women are unable to travel far from their homesteads.

This year, we also learned a lot about the agroecology and seasonal patterns in the project area. During the monsoon, regular gardening activities were hampered by heavy rainfall and water logging. To combat this, we focused on re-distribution of seeds and frequent follow-up by field staff in order to assist participants in recovering and attaining maximum yields. Moreover, FAARM project is now including gardening in sacks as one strategy to address this challenge.<sup>1</sup> Poor soil fertility is another big problem in this area. We are providing training on compost preparation and use in the home gardens. Additionally, some participants do not have access to their own land or have access to very little land. These

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<sup>1</sup> To do this, one fills up a sack with soil to elevate the plants from water, similar to pots. Plants can also be grown along the side of the sack in addition to the top.



households cultivate on open land or make arrangements to use neighbors' or family members' land. The variation in the amount and quality of land will affect the total yields and the seasonal productions. On some low-lying land, production of quick-growing post-flood varieties is not possible, and the field facilitator has advised pit-crops or climbing crops for those beneficiaries.<sup>2</sup> This approach provides good production of only a limited number of crops.

Other issues are tied to the lack of freedom of participating women to leave their homesteads or other cultural constraints. Due to pregnancy and religious belief, sometimes participants cannot come to regular meetings and court yard sessions. When this happens we have allowed other household members, such as the mother in law, husband, or sister in law to attend with the enlisted participant or instead of the listed participant. Similarly, some households (mainly Hindu families) are not interested to rear poultry in their household so the project is working to develop an improved duck rearing component. In addition, many Hindu households in this area still practice purity and pollution rituals in which individuals outside of their religious communities cannot dine with or touch the cooking utensils of the household. This will complicate cooking demonstration activities and in-house interpersonal nutrition counselling.

### **Sustainability**

5. How has the project had a positive impact on the community/ies at the core of the project and what will be the long term benefits? Please explain if the project has helped empower the beneficiaries by providing greater autonomy.

FAARM has only begun in all 1 200 households on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, but we have already seen positive impacts in some of the early participants. For example, Nipa Begum (WID-92813) is a member of the FAARM project living in Panzarai, Kargaon union, Nabigonj Upazila. Her husband Ramizullah is a day labourer. There are seven members in her family (three daughters and two sons). The younger daughter is three years old.

After selection, she was provided with training on gardening and local poultry rearing and she received eight types of nutritious vegetable seeds. With the assistance of her husband, she has been cultivating vegetables in her homestead area. She said "we have land but we don't know how to cultivate diversified vegetables in our garden. But, now we can grow different types of vegetable, which meet our daily requirement of vegetables. In the future, we will sell vegetable from our garden." She is now preparing to improve poultry shed, which she learned from training.

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<sup>2</sup> Pit crops are single plants that produce a sizable amount of produce and can be planted on elevated mounds, such as pumpkin. Climbing crops, such as bean or pumpkin flower and leaf production, can be also planted on elevated mounds and then elevated to prevent damage from water.

More generally, project sustainability depends on the different activities of the project as well as on linkage with different stakeholder. FAARM project we provides different trainings to the partner organization and other community stakeholders to ensure sustainability after the project ends. FAARM is also establishing VMF at the community level. A key component of HKI’s Homestead Food Production approach supports village model farms (VMFs), which in turn provide inputs and technical support to 20 and up to 40 households in their village. As a way to sustain their activities, VMFs also sell seeds, seedlings and produce to fellow community members, often aggregating surplus produce from other gardeners. The VMF lead farmers demonstrate best practices in their own gardens; other program participants who come to the farm learn and are able replicate new ideas and technologies in plots around their own homesteads. FAARM is also working with the Government of Bangladesh to ensure FAARM participant also receive support from the GOB service provider, such as the Department of Agriculture, the Department of livestock extension, and the Community clinics.



6. Will the project continue in the future or is it now complete? Will further funding be required in the future to complete the work? Please indicate if the initial funding request was a multi-year project. \*\* (see footnote)

The project will continue up until early 2019 for four complete years of implementation. The initial funding request was for 3 years of support, and we still have a budget gap between the cost of the support we would like to give these communities and the amount of funding currently available to HKI Bangladesh.



## Finance

7. Please provide a summarised breakdown of how TFWA Care funds were utilised for the project.

	Line Item	Proposed budget in Euro	TFWA contribution in euro	Expenses up to Sept'15	Remaining Balance in euro	% of expenditure
I.	Personnel	31,264	4,636	5,852	-1,216	126%
II	Fringe and allowances	12,319	1,827	2,746	-919	150%
III.	Sub-grants	55,559	8,238	3,485	4,753	42%
IV	Travel	4,320	641	672	-31	105%
V	Program	3,727	553	0	553	0%
VI	Program Support - Equipment and Supplies	2,076	308	0	308	0%
VII	Other Direct Cost	3,131	464	327	137	70%
<b>DIRECT PROGRAM COST :</b>		<b>112,398</b>	<b>16,667</b>	<b>13,082</b>	<b>3,584</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Overhead (20%)</b>		<b>22,480</b>	<b>3,333</b>	<b>2,616</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM COST :</b>		<b>134,878</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>15,698</b>	<b>4,301</b>	<b>78%</b>

Please attach your latest annual report as well as any pictures you would like to use to illustrate this report.

We would be grateful if you could send this to John Rimmer ([j.rimmer@tfwa.com](mailto:j.rimmer@tfwa.com)) by **November 6 2015 at the latest.**

\*\* If you would like to submit a request for further funding for a **new project** to be funded by TFWA CARE in 2016, please complete the form on the following page.