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Evaluation of the "Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH): Strengthening the enabling environment for food security and nutrition" programme

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Abstract

This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH) programme funded jointly by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union with the overall objective to improve the enabling environment to eradicate food insecurity and malnutrition. The evaluation was initiated in December 2020 using a hybrid approach (outcome harvesting combined with conventional evaluation) to capture the complexity of a capacity development project aimed at influencing the multifaceted food security and nutrition (FSN) enabling environment.

The most central impact of the MUCH programme has been to enhance an underlying policy shift towards addressing food insecurity and malnutrition by supporting technical capacity development, designing the details of policies, supporting improved institutional function to make the shift meaningful. MUCH supported development of a series of complementary policies that help the Government of Bangladesh make good on its commitment to improving nutrition throughout the country by supporting improved access and utilization of diverse foods, in addition to continued support to safe production and processing of diverse foods.

A key element of support MUCH provided to making this policy shift work was significant enhancement of technical officers' capacities to gather and analyse FSN evidence to inform policy dialogue. Through the MUCH collaboration, Government technical officers and leadership built their capacity to better monitor and analyse country-wide food security and nutrition developments to inform policy and programming reaction and improvement. The improved policy processes helped open the door to more participation of civil society and subnational stakeholders, which is already improving policy outcomes for disadvantaged communities and women.

The programme also supported innovative approaches for engaging students in nutrition learning activities with a good chance of sustaining within academia going forward and an effective process to engage quality research to inform policy decision makers with sound evidence and new findings.

The strongest concerns have to do with the missed opportunity to elevate the discussion among sector leaders (as the programme focus remained at technical level) and to support institutional change through formal mechanisms and processes for more inclusive policy dialogue, an enhanced, government-directed research-policy nexus, and cross-sectoral collaboration within food-based sectors and among all nutrition stakeholders. It is acknowledged that these are difficult, long-term institutional issues to address and thus highlighted as objectives for continued collaboration and dialogue.

A recognized essential part of the FSN enabling environment, while not the specific focus for MUCH, is subnational programme implementation. A mid-term course adjustment added direct support to sub-national capacity development through key partnerships, capacity development activities, and more follow-up and programming support from the national level to the subnational level. This adjustment showed promise and should be elevated going forward. Similarly, women's empowerment and gender equity, while included in the MUCH programme, needs more attention and prioritization within all FSN programming and policies.

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Acknowledgements

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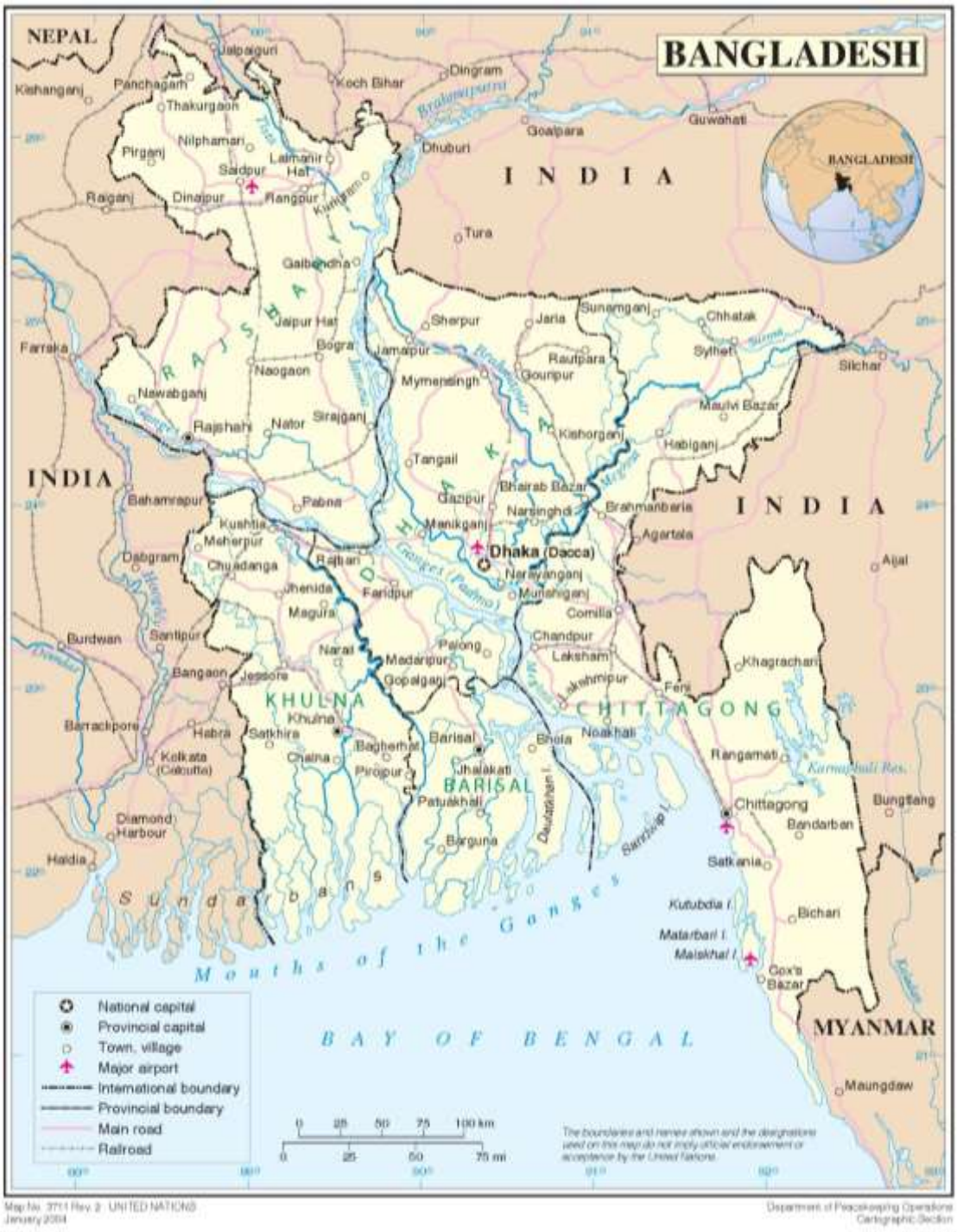
The evaluation benefited from the sincere insights shared by many stakeholders, offering both critical and complimentary observations, all in the interest of improving cooperation going forward. Considering the logistical challenges in organizing meetings, we are deeply grateful for the willingness and helpfulness of stakeholders in sharing their honest thoughts: this evaluation would not have been possible without these contributions.

OED would further like to extend gratitude to the principal members of the MUCH programme, including key members within the Government of Bangladesh, officers from the European Union and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the current and former members of the FAO implementing team and advisers: their willingness to support, advise, and share insights and observations, for many of them well after their direct involvement, enabled a thorough and well-contextualized evaluation.

Abbreviations and acronyms

BIRTAN	Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition
BNNC	Bangladesh National Nutrition Council
CIP	Country Investment Plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FPMU	Food Planning and Monitoring Unit
FSN	Food security and nutrition security
MUCH	Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge
NFNSP	National Food and Nutrition Security Policy
NFPCSP	National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme
NPAN	National Plan of Action for Nutrition
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Map of Bangladesh



Source: UN. 2004. *Map of Bangladesh* [online]. https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/bangladesh

Executive summary

Introduction

1. The five-year Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH) programme, funded jointly by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union, was designed as a follow-on effort to the multiphase ten-year National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP). MUCH was designed around five outcomes with the overall objective to improve the enabling environment to eradicate food insecurity and malnutrition; it would consolidate capacities built under NFPCSP and increase involvement of additional key partners.

2. This evaluation was initiated by the Office of Evaluation (OED) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to serve an accountability function as well as to support ongoing and future collaboration planning and dialogue among stakeholders, both domestic and international, with interests in food security and nutrition (FSN). The evaluation was mandated to consider MUCH as one programme with two donors.

3. The evaluation was initiated in December 2020 using a hybrid approach (outcome harvesting combined with conventional evaluation) to capture the complexity of a capacity development project aimed at influencing the multifaceted FSN enabling environment. The evaluation was organized to be adaptive and flexible to account for several complicating factors: the MUCH technical assistance team was undergoing reorganization, COVID-19 prevented in-person interaction, the project was nearing an end with possibility of an extension, some aspects of the project remained ongoing.

4. The evaluation team comprised three evaluation and subject matter experts, one based in Bangladesh and two internationally. The team collected primary empirical data from over 80 involved stakeholders through a combination of individual interviews, focus group discussions and workshops. All data collection was completed virtually. Over 100 documents produced by the project and partners were also reviewed. The evaluation team analysed the data for evidence of performance against the project objectives, as well as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, long-term changes, sustainability, gender, and efficiency).

5. Initial findings were presented in-person and report format to FAO stakeholders. Based on feedback, the report was adjusted and prepared for presentation to and consideration by all stakeholders. The findings on project objectives (evaluation criteria are incorporated), conclusions and recommendations, summarized below, reflect an iterative dialogue among stakeholders about the results of the collaboration. There remains some divergence in perspectives but there is general agreement about the positive outcomes and prospects for continued collaboration.

Main findings

6. Stakeholders expressed universal appreciation of MUCH as having made substantial and positive impact on the food security and nutrition enabling environment in Bangladesh while also pointing out areas they wished had been addressed more fully. The evaluation team, similarly, found solid performance across the review criteria and intended outcomes while identifying room for more strategic impact in each area.

7. The results across all the MUCH objectives represent a major contribution to an improved enabling environment for FSN in Bangladesh. Perhaps the most fundamental impact is from the role MUCH played in moving policy and commitment from ensuring sufficient food availability for the country through production, to eliminating malnutrition and food insecurity throughout the country through production, access, and utilization of diverse foods. This elevated commitment was commented on repeatedly by stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation.

8. Similarly, the technical support provided by MUCH substantially improved the details and thoroughness of policy and monitoring of food-based approaches to nutrition. For example, progress towards nutrition is more carefully reported within the Second Country Investment Plan (CIP2) monitoring reports, policies include detailed goals, and the CIP2 identifies sector-by-sector investments needed to address the multiple facets of malnutrition. The evaluation team received strong impressions from many stakeholders that capacities improved, especially among technical officers in the Ministry of Food's Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) but also within the other key ministries, to produce and present more complete technical analysis to inform policy dialogue.

9. MUCH was designed as a national policy effort but nonetheless impacted international work undertaken by FAO, other United Nations agencies, donors, and even other governments. Through participation in established forums and cross visits, MUCH helped others learn from a focus on food systems, integrating policy development and monitoring capacity development, and integrating research and policy work, among others.

10. Furthermore, the MUCH programme reacted well to new opportunities and challenges – adding support to subnational awareness building (though late in the programme) and adjusting to the dramatic constraints imposed by the pandemic – showing the potential for productive extended collaboration in the coming dynamic period.

11. The most basic part of the FSN enabling environment, while not the specific focus for MUCH, is subnational programme implementation. MUCH was designed to address this by influencing priorities within ministries active delivering services at the subnational level. This approach proved too subtle: it did not lead to substantial subnational investment nor to translation of policy into subnational programmes in respective ministries. Some stakeholders pushed the MUCH programme to employ more explicit support to subnational capacities and by the end of the implementation period, this was showing good promise in the form of the partnership with the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN) in the Ministry of Agriculture for subnational nutrition-sensitive policy awareness building. While this adjustment came too late and was too limited to have lasting institutional impact, it demonstrated important possibilities – of how partnerships can help bridge the policy-implementation gap – and should provide strong evidence for new programme directions (COVID-19 restrictions further constrained this activity, limiting it to virtual interaction; without this, it can be reasonably assumed that the impact and appreciation for subnational awareness building would have been higher still.)

12. MUCH covered the basic elements of promoting gender sensitive FSN policy and monitoring but has opportunity to apply lessons learned in promotion of women's leadership, decision-making opportunities, and gender equality. MUCH supported inclusion of gender considerations within the key policy documents, including targets and disaggregated monitoring, but there was room for greater emphasis – in policy and programming, in culture and practice – emphasis on gender equity and women in leadership. Demonstrating more innovation, MUCH supported new approaches for engaging students in nutrition learning activities with a good chance of sustaining

within academia going forward, offering new programme design for engaging youth in agriculture.

13. The strongest concerns are for the missed opportunity to have elevated progress to the institutional level. While MUCH met outcomes within the logical framework, various challenges combined to keep these impacts at the more technical rather than strategic level of the FSN enabling environment. The evaluation and many stakeholders were left wishing MUCH had more of a lasting impact on fundamental aspects of the enabling environment: policy consultative processes while improved may easily revert to previous form; multi-stakeholder collaboration while improved, remains ad hoc; inclusive policy dialogue also remains transactional and translation of policy into programmes remains tentative. Collaboration could pursue more formal mechanisms and processes for inclusive policy dialogue, a codified research-policy nexus, and multi-level cross-sectoral collaboration – within food-based sectors and among all nutrition stakeholders. It is acknowledged that these are difficult, long-term institutional issues and thus highlighted as objectives for continued collaboration and dialogue.

14. According to many stakeholders, this stronger focus on technical collaboration and weaker progress on strategic collaboration is at least partly attributable to a collection of administrative and bureaucratic shortcomings that demanded too much energy and high-level attention: stakeholders were distracted from the important high-level collaboration to improving institutional norms.

15. In multiple interviews, stakeholders identified four key problematics: i) lack of shared vision among stakeholder leaders – government, donors, FAO – regarding the MUCH modality and programme governance; ii) insufficiently broad ownership of the programme objectives and procedures; iii) not addressing competing administrative expectations (such as interest among government agencies in salary subsidy and work incentives) early and with accountability; and iv) unresponsive human resources (HR) bureaucracy within FAO. Each of these issues detracted from the strategic potential. However, in retrospect, no issue appears intractable.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. The MUCH programme's policy level work was relevant, and well timed to coincide with swelling policy interest in moving beyond food production to also address nutrition and quality. Considering the evolving policy framework and institutional mandates, the MUCH programme was appropriately based within the food production sector, within the FPMU as an appropriate entry point. This allowed them to consolidate and enhance important technical skills. Earlier and broader integration with additional ministries (especially with the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock) and other non-government stakeholders would have been even better and may have led to more strategic impact throughout the sector.

17. There was consistent agreement among stakeholders that the MUCH partnership among the Government of Bangladesh, FAO and key donors has been substantially successful and, if renewed and revised, will remain essential to bringing the resources, expertise and energy needed to realize the Government's vision for ending food insecurity and malnutrition. This partnership retains strong potential to address systemic challenges within the food-based solutions to nutrition challenges and to address all angles of the enabling environment – from policy development to implementation capacities, to monitoring and reporting. All stakeholders felt this partnership could be key to tying and linking the many, but often disconnected, efforts of many contributing stakeholders. With key programme and modality adjustments, the evaluation suggests there is

potential for this partnership to leverage positive impact well beyond actual expenditures on the FSN realities for the Bangladesh people.

18. The evaluation findings point to several very specific recommendations that will be important to maximizing the continued relevance, improving the sustainability of improvements, and ensuring improved efficiency and equitability of impact. The focus will need to both elevate attention to institutional issues and devolve to address subnational implementation challenges. Collaboration should stay focused on food-based solutions (nutrition-sensitive) and partners working to enhance, availability of and access to quality, nutritious foods for all communities. While the programme can sponsor events and facilitate meetings, it should empower local actors to take the role of convenor – for research, for multi-sector planning, and for policy dialogue – with FAO, providing advisory support rather than filling technical roles. Gender equality and women's empowerment need to become a stronger focus throughout all levels – policy, research, programming and services – with more efforts put into innovation and partnerships, calling on the experience and using advice from the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP). To enable the programme partners to focus on strategic issues, programme governance needs to be improved, focused and utilized to heighten transparency, push appropriate administrative agreements, and call for improved HR and other resource management. All these changes should contribute to more strategic impact and greater national ownership over the food-based solutions to the national nutrition challenge.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation and intended users

1. The final evaluation of the Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH) programme was requested by the donors and was included in the initial project document. As the overall budget for MUCH was above USD 4 million, the programme was also subject to a mandatory evaluation according to the internal practices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

2. The evaluation was designed to serve an accountability purpose and to provide evidence to the Government of Bangladesh, donors, beneficiaries and FAO on how the resources have been used and what have been the main results achieved. Recommendations and findings are designed to inform lessons and strengthen future collaboration among the Government of Bangladesh, donors and FAO. It is also expected to clarify ongoing and future technical cooperation for FAO and the Government of Bangladesh. Other Member Countries in this region and stakeholders working on food security and nutrition (FSN) could also use this evaluation to replicate successes in the eradication of hunger and malnutrition.

1.2 Scope and objective of the evaluation

3. The scope of the evaluation included the overall programme, comprising both the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and European Union-funded aspects. While separate agreements were signed by the respective donors and the project is recognized as two different entities in the FAO financial system, there is only one project document approved and signed by FAO and the Government of Bangladesh. MUCH was evaluated as a single programme, not as separate projects.

4. The overall objective of the evaluation was to document the effectiveness and contributions of the programme to creating an enabling environment for the eradication of food insecurity and malnutrition. The evaluation was designed to generate and consolidate existing evidence on the performance of the project interventions around key evaluation questions. The specific questions follow, grouped along the lines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria.

1.2.1 Evaluation questions

i. Relevance – responding to needs, policies, priorities:

- Were the programme outputs and outcomes relevant and appropriate to the country's priorities, policies and legal frameworks, both at central and local levels, in relation to FSN?
- Was the programme design based on the needs and priorities of target groups, including the host government, programme partners, and other enablers concerned with FSN?
- Did the programme adapt in a timely and appropriate way to changes in circumstances, particularly COVID-19 challenges?

ii. Coherence – compatibility with other interventions in Bangladesh, the FSN sector, or institutions:

- Did the programme complement past, existing and/or planned FSN-related initiatives and actions taken by the Government, FAO and other stakeholders?
- What has been FAO's added value and what are the critical areas for future work to contribute to the final long-term goal?
- Were synergies created by the programme and other interventions rather than overlapping or duplicating other similar previous and existing interventions in the country?
- Did programme investments in research and studies create useful synergy, generate useful evidence, and move research capacities and agendas towards more helpfully informing FSN policy processes?

iii. Effectiveness – achievement of objectives:

- To what extent did the programme achieve the outputs as identified in the programme document?
- What have been the main results to which the programme contributed under the different components and to what extent are results significant?
- To what extent did capacity development (and the use of policy tools introduced by the programme) influence decision- or policymaking to incorporate FSN more?
- Did the programme achieve the specific outcome (Strengthened enabling environment for eradicating food insecurity and malnutrition) as measured by agreed indicators?

iv. Long-term changes and sustainability – the extent to which benefits are likely to continue:

- Are the achievements of the programme likely to last and be sustained by the Government and other stakeholders?
- Did the programme contribute to engaging and strengthening the long-term commitment of enablers – government and non-government – to addressing FSN through systemic improvements?

v. Gender and vulnerable groups – supporting gender equality and benefits for vulnerable groups:

- Did the programme account for gender and other vulnerable groups in its design as well as in management, governance and implementation?
- To what extent did the programme contribute to the outcomes and final goal of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality?

vi. Efficiency of the implementing strategy – economic and timely delivery of results:

- Was the project implementation strategy (the most) suitable to achieve the intended results?
- How well did implementing partners coordinate?
- Was the governance set-up of the programme suitable to support delivery of results?

- Did the programme have a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and knowledge system in place and did these systems inform project activities?

1.3 Methodology

5. The evaluation was guided by the evaluation questions and focused on the programme's observed outcomes and achievements. It adopted a consultative and transparent attitude with internal and external stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. Triangulation of evidence and information gathered allowed a rigorous analysis and supported conclusions and recommendations.

6. The evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and was in line with the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) Manual and methodological guidelines and practices. It also followed the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2022).

7. MUCH, with its focus on capacity development for an improved FSN enabling environment, presents a complex challenge for evaluation. Challenges inherent to the nature of policy processes include, for example (adapted from Jones, 2011):

   i. Influencing policies is a long-term process, and changes can be slow and incremental.
   ii. Because of the fluid policy environment, strategies aimed at influencing policies are rarely repeated or replicated (little accumulation of knowledge).
   iii. Engaging in a policy process may have political consequences.
   iv. Links between cause and effect are often unpredictable, and it is not always possible to infer causality between activities and outcomes.
   v. The definition of success can vary depending on who is asked.
   vi. It is not feasible to attribute the impacts of a policy reform to a specific policy influence strategy since there are many actors, variables and factors contributing to the same end, and it is usually difficult to map all of them.

8. Evaluating MUCH as a capacity development effort added to the complexity, considering the multiple actors involved in the FSN enabling environment – from various ministries to civil society, government leaders to students, central officers to subnational service providers – and the varied state of their capacities and interests.

1.3.1 Approach and tools

9. The MUCH programme involved a great deal of complexity in the variety of stakeholders involved and the nature of the intervention. The evaluation team worked to appreciate this complexity, avoid oversimplification in findings and to represent the diversity of the programme's impact, challenges and interactions. In discussion with OED, it was decided that the best way to accommodate this complexity and to deal with the challenges of conducting an evaluation during a pandemic would be to centre the evaluation in the Outcome Harvesting approach – Wilson-Grau and Britt detail how outcome harvesting is a tool well suited for evaluation in complex settings (2012, p. 2). Applying outcome harvesting allowed the evaluation team to include a diversity of perspectives and allowed inclusion of divergent findings and subtle differences of perspective.

10. While centred on outcome harvesting – putting the experience of stakeholders first and identifying contributions from the programme to the enabling environment – the evaluation team applied a hybrid approach that also added conventional review matching results to plans.

11. The MUCH approach strongly aligns the first approach to policy influence outlined by Jones (2011, p. 6) *evidence and advice* in which programmes "provide research and advisory support to a southern government to assist with a process of reform." This approach lends itself to evaluation focused on uptake of outputs (rather than outputs themselves) and impact on policy processes by, using "interviews and participatory exercises with a variety of stakeholders… and carrying out a significant level of analysis…" (ibid.). Accordingly, for this evaluation the team relied heavily on interviews, focus group discussions, and workshops with stakeholders to collect meaningful data related to the six evaluation questions. Document review augmented this and allowed triangulation.

12. The FAO Policy on Gender Equality (2020) was a reference document for evaluating the integration of gender in the design and implementation of the programme. Given the nature of the programme, FAO's Corporate Strategy on Capacity Development was a reference for key recommended actions. A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Policy Influence (Jones, 2011) provided a key structure and reference point for comparing key findings with industry best practices.

13. As a result of limited in-person access due to COVID-19 restrictions, the evaluation relied heavily on primary data collected through remote (phone/online) discussions with key informants and stakeholder groups (not complemented by first-hand observation). The data set included: i) documentation provided by the project implementing team; ii) interviews with key informants; and iii) focus group discussions with three groups of key stakeholders – researchers, students, and subnational officers. A list of stakeholders interviewed is available in Appendix 1.

1.3.2 Evaluation steps

14. The evaluation team progressed through six steps. The first step involved the document review and initial discussions with key internal stakeholders to identify potential significant outcomes (for outcome harvesting) and to gather data on specific outputs. The second step involved a participatory workshop with the project team and the primary counterparts – officers from the FPMU and others as determined in consultation – to enhance and expand on the draft outcomes identified in step one. The third step entailed broader data collection which generated both confirming/contradictory evidence. This step included semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion with civil society and subnational stakeholders.

15. In the fourth step, the evaluation team analysed the combined data and draft proposed outcome statements. The analysis process involved findings sorting and sense-making, with extensive and iterative grouping and comparison of findings from all stakeholders. This interpretive approach to data analysis provides context and explanatory power in answering the evaluation questions. There were many conflicting statements from various stakeholders – reflecting their points of view and vested interests; the interpretive approach to data analysis sought to understand these underlying reasons for the contradictions, enhancing the usefulness of the findings to ongoing collaboration and reformulation of cooperation arrangements.

16. The fifth step involved final "book-end" workshops with the project team and key internal stakeholders, presenting initial findings and outcomes for comment and potential revision. This was an integral part of the outcome harvesting analysis and sense-making intended to both help create the final findings and build greater ownership over those findings.

17. The sixth step involved write-up, converting the presentations and discussion from the fifth step into the draft evaluation report for comment and feedback followed by finalization of the written report. The fifth and sixth steps, in reality, took place together, with workshops for the donors and Government coming after the findings report was drafted.

18. The involvement of stakeholders in key formative and affirming steps was designed to improve both the relevance and acceptance of the findings. Independent data – from the evaluation team's consultations with stakeholders – adds rigour to the findings. The consultation of project documents ensures consistency with existing project reports and written contributions.

19. Overall, there were more than 80 stakeholders consulted through the process, ranging from high-level government officials in Dhaka to district level service providers. The team managed to interview stakeholders no longer directly involved in the project and several who were no longer based in Bangladesh. The participation of such a broad cross-section of stakeholders impressed the evaluation team with their goodwill and continued interest in the project, reflecting positively on the collective commitment and engagement in the overall effort and partnership. This also contributed significantly to the rigour and validity of the findings.

Table 1. Evaluation steps

No.	Evaluation Action	Outcome Harvesting	Coherence, efficiency and outputs
1	Document review	Identifying potential outcomes	Document efficiency Document outputs
2	Partner workshop	Enhance and add new outcomes	
3	Broader data collection	Additional evidence; confirm or pose new outcomes	Verify coherence
4	Data analysis	Final outcome statements	Compile initial findings
5	Partner workshop	Verify and adjust outcomes	Verify and adjust findings
6	Write-up	Draft narrative report for approval Redraft and finalize as necessary.	

Source: Developed by the evaluation team.

1.4 Limitations

20. This programme evaluation was not a formal evaluation of improved capacities of the national stakeholders: it did not involve a formal quantitative survey nor a detailed capacity assessment. It depended heavily on the observations and opinions of stakeholders directly involved in the programme and the larger FSN enabling environment in Bangladesh, with confirming and collaborating evidence from documents – project reports and project-

produced documents. As such, it necessarily reflects the divergent views of a complex network of stakeholders.

21. It should be noted clearly that none of the findings rely exclusively on one stakeholder or another: every finding is the result of interpretive analysis combining, triangulating and cross-checking data from multiple sources.

22. The evaluation team worked to distil from this a consistent set of findings. However, some of the findings may remain controversial or disputed by one of the stakeholders. The evaluation team does not see this as a problem, but rather a strength: the report is intended to inform ongoing collaboration and dialogue; if there is a difference of opinion among the stakeholders, this report can help frame the next set of negotiations about the best way forward. This report offers an interpretation of the outcome of the MUCH programme founded on the evidence provided directly or indirectly by nearly 100 stakeholders. The evaluation team worked to analyse this evidence to produce a constructive critique to enhance further collaboration.

1.5 Structure of the report

23. This report has been developed consistent with the FAO OED office's template for evaluation reports. After the introduction and background, which introduce the context for the evaluation, follows the body of findings (section 3), which detail the results of the outcome harvesting and triangulation analysis. The following section lessons learned (section 4) presents the evaluation teams understanding of the factors that led to successes and ongoing challenges for the project. The conclusions and recommendations (section 5) offer a summary of the findings related to the evaluation questions and recommendations for the stakeholders, respectively. The bibliography includes works directly cited as well as works consulted during the evaluation. The appendices include the list of stakeholders directly consulted, a list of project related documents received and reviewed by the team and short biographies of the Evaluation Team Leader and team members.

24. The report is accompanied by the following appendices:

Appendix 1. Stakeholders consulted

Appendix 2. Documents consulted

Appendix 3. Evaluation team

2. Background and context of the project

2.1 Context of the project

25. Bangladesh faces a significant number of food security and nutrition-related challenges. At least 39 million people, almost one-third of its population, live below the poverty line, of which a substantial proportion are confronted with extreme poverty. Moreover, Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world and is growing by more than 2 million people per year. Despite the per capita availability of food having improved significantly, the high-levels of poverty, population growth and urbanization place immense pressure on the national food and agricultural system to keep up with demand. A further complication to these challenges is the impact of climate change which poses an additional and growing challenge to FSN.

26. To respond to the multiple FSN challenges the country is facing, FAO, in consultation with the Ministry of Food of the Government of Bangladesh, designed, in 2014, the "Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH)" programme with the objective of strengthening the enabling environment for the eradication of food insecurity and malnutrition. The programme, which builds upon the previous National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP), implemented during 2005–2014, has been funded by the USAID (USD 8 026 701) and the European Union (USD 8 976 800).

27. The MUCH programme was scheduled to run from 2015 through 2020. USAID funding was provided in early 2015 and European Union funding in 2017. At the time of the evaluation initiation (December 2020), the parties were negotiating an extension of the programme.

28. The programme has five main outputs, which are:

    i. Improved capacities of the Government and stakeholders for developing national FSN frameworks, cross-sectoral policy frameworks, cross-sectoral and sectoral investment plans, as well as programmes for FSN.
    ii. Improved capacities of the Government for human resources and organizational development in the FSN domain.
    iii. Increased capacities of the Government to ensure the adequacy of resource allocation and use for FSN.
    iv. Improved capacities of the Government, civil society and private sector to effectively engage in dialogue on FSN policies and programmes.
    v. Improved capacities of the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) and FSN-related ministries to monitor and map trends and analyse the contribution of sectors and stakeholders to FSN.

29. MUCH was located, physically, within the Ministry of Food's FPMU, as was the NFPCSP. The design called for also working with stakeholders outside this ministry, including, but not limited to, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The geographic target for the programme was the entire country, as the strategy was to influence the enabling environment at the central level.

30. The MUCH programme became part of a larger European Union-funded nutrition-oriented programme, involving additional ministries and civil society actors, with international non-

governmental organizations (NGOs) selected as implementing agents for two other substantial projects. Joint governance for the joint programme was eventually established (2018).

31. MUCH lined up directly with country and FAO priorities, related directly to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.

32. A unified framework was designed for the MUCH programme and is depicted in the diagram below.

Table 2. Project logical framework

Objective	Strengthened enabling environment for eradicating food insecurity and malnutrition				
	⇧	⇧	⇧	⇧	⇧
The enabling environment is characterized by:	Improved Cross-sectoral and sectoral policies and investment framework/programmes for FSN that are gender-sensitive.	Improved Human and organizational resource development for FSN.	Improved Financial resource allocation for FSN.	Improved Inclusiveness of governance and coordination mechanisms for FSN.	Improved Comprehensiveness of information generation to support FSN policy and programming.
	⇧	⇧	⇧	⇧	⇧
Outputs	1) Improved capacities of the Government and stakeholders for developing national FSN frameworks, cross-sectoral policy frameworks, cross-sectoral and sectoral investment plans, as well as programmes for FSN.	2) Improved capacities of the Government for human resources and organizational development in the FSN domain.	3) Increased capacities of the Government to ensure the adequacy of resource allocation and use for FSN.	4) Improved capacities of the Government, civil society and private sector to effectively engage in dialogue on FSN policies and programmes.	5) Improved capacities of the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit and FSN-related ministries to monitor and map trends and analyse the contribution of sectors and stakeholders to FSN.

Source: Evaluation terms of reference based on the project document.

33. The evaluation team worked with this as the theory of change (TOC). However, it should be noted that the programme evolved to include new elements of the enabling environment, particularly with an activity for subnational capacity development. This adaptation recognized the centrality of implementation to the enabling environment and the need for MUCH to engage in this element. This will be addressed within the lessons learned section (5.2).

3. Findings on evaluation questions

34. The findings below are presented in direct correspondence to the evaluation questions. The outcome harvesting approach generated substantial evidence related to all six questions, with project documents providing additional data points. The performance of the project related to the project logical framework is explicitly addressed in EQ 3 below, while impacts on the overall enabling environment are addressed throughout.

3.1 EQ 1. Relevance. Responding to needs, policies, priorities

3.1.1 Relevance of policy framework support

Finding 1. The MUCH programme's policy level work and output was relevant, supporting and strengthening prioritization of nutrition within the national policy framework.

35. The MUCH programme outcomes and outputs are in line with previous policy positions across the board, namely with SDG 2, the FAO Country Programming Framework, the priorities for both donors and, most of all, with the Government of Bangladesh's evolving policy positions. In the Seventh Five Year Plan, Bangladesh strove for an "adequate and stable supply of safe food for everyone, especially women and children" (p. 519). This has moved with the Eighth Five Year Plan towards more emphasis on nutrition and MUCH has been widely credited with a key role in helping this transition. MUCH supported policy documents that detailed how the country will move beyond support of food production (mostly rice) to support of diverse food production, access and utilization at the household level. Complementing this set of documents, MUCH has supported the elevation of nutrition as a priority within the production-oriented ministries – Ministry of Food, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. Further evidence of the relevance and alignment with government priorities include public statements by the Prime Minister on the importance of nutrition, and the quick adoption by the Government of key policy outputs, including the Country Investment Plan 2: Nutrition-Sensitive Food Systems and the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2020 (NFNSP).

3.1.2 Alignment of modality to Bangladesh structures and policies

Finding 2. Considering the evolving policy framework and institutional cultures, the MUCH programme was appropriately based within the food production sector. However, impact may have been greater with stronger and earlier ties with additional ministries (Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock) and other non-government stakeholders. The FPMU was an appropriate entry point.

36. The European Union-supported midterm review (Vijghen, 2020, p. 32) expressed an opinion that the MUCH programme would have been better aligned with the Second National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN2) if it were seated within the Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC), supporting that body as the nutrition coordination mechanism. However, many stakeholders expressed to the evaluation team strong reservations about such a proposal, citing different professional cultures, methodologies and approaches between the food production and health sectors – it is not unique to Bangladesh that the *nutrition-sensitive* and *nutrition-specific* sectors have such differences. Yet both sectors are essential to the Government's vision for addressing malnutrition, and coordination is agreed to be important to enhancing impact of all programmes.

37. Several stakeholders mentioned to the evaluation team that the BNNC has outstanding capacity development needs to be able to fill its mandate. Other stakeholders appropriately pointed out that technical support from MUCH did improve *collaboration* capacities – with better evidence, more informative analysis, and better capacities to understand and use such information – among all nutrition stakeholders, including the BNNC. FAO, along with FPMU, has been contributing to the food-based nutrition strategies, policies and action plans for long, and has supported BNNC intensively during the MUCH period – responding admirably to the new opportunity presented after the project design – by developing tools and guidelines. However, considering stakeholder opinions expressed to the review team, it is difficult to conclude that FAO (which has been the leading voice supporting the food-based solutions to nutrition in Bangladesh and globally) is the best organization to lead capacity development work with the health sector-based BNNC going forward.

38. The policy makes it clear that there need to be multiple levels of collaboration: the Eighth Five Year Plan indicates that, while the BNNC will work as an overarching mechanism, "The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will collaborate with the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Food to address nutrition and food safety issues" (p. 601). The evaluation team finds that policy and institutional needs support a two-step approach to nutrition coordination in Bangladesh: first, the food sector with improved planning, implementing, and monitoring capacities; and second, coordination within a broader set of actors including the health sector (leadership of the entire nutrition coordination – whether within the health sector or elevated to an overarching ministry [Ministry of Planning] – is a separate issue on which this evaluation team will not comment). Regardless, it is clear that the food- and production-related sector benefits from internal coordination. This is an important role MUCH has supported the Ministry of Food to play, and this function is needed going forward.

39. Conversations with the designers of the MUCH programme indicated the expectation that MUCH implementation would have approached the FPMU in the Ministry of Food as an entry point to working more deeply with the other ministries, especially the food-oriented ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, with stronger presence at the subnational level. The NFPCSP had already worked directly with the FPMU for ten years and it was agreed that MUCH needed to extend its support. Conversations indicated that while MUCH did engage with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, it should have done so earlier, more intensely, with more substance, energy and resources to support development of lasting food-based nutrition initiatives within these ministries and especially to have such initiatives reaching through these ministries to the subnational level. The evaluation team recognizes that *expectation* of supporting this shift among multiple ministries was beyond MUCH's stated scope; stakeholders ought to consider how to support this effort going forward and how being based within the FPMU can help this effort.

3.1.3 Adapting to new opportunities and challenges

Finding 3. The MUCH programme constructively adapted to a new major challenge – COVID 19 (2020 on) – and two new opportunities – a reactivated BNNC (early in the project) and subnational engagement (undertaken towards the end of implementation).

40. The COVID-19 pandemic obviously challenged implementation for MUCH from 2020 to the end of the project. Project officers and stakeholders acknowledged how the pandemic

seriously setback programme implementation: among other activities, the research project implementation was delayed, collaboration with the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN) on subnational awareness raising efforts was scaled down and done virtually, and the Nutrition Olympiad (NO) was cancelled for the final year. However, the programme adapted quickly. In the words of one stakeholder: "with a slight delay, people showed impressive adaptability, including within the Government of Bangladesh." The stakeholder elaborated: "communications among partners were well managed, maybe people started communicating even more than before." While programme activities were necessarily curtailed, the programme continued with a revised approach, especially for field activities. Furthermore, MUCH technically supported conduct of an online youth survey following COVID-19. The findings revealed that adolescents and youth who were exposed to nutrition education, via MUCH supported initiatives such as Nutrition Clubs (NC) and the Nutrition Challenge Badge (NCB), had a lower prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity and a higher dietary diversity when compared to others – this suggests these initiatives enhanced food and nutrition resilience to unexpected shocks.

41. The programme was also adapted in two other key areas. One was the opportunity presented as the BNNC became more active. At the start of MUCH, the BNNC was essentially inactive, but shortly after MUCH was launched, Government of Bangladesh leadership reactivated the council with a strong mandate to coordinate national efforts on nutrition. MUCH leadership did engage with the council, offering training opportunities and, more importantly, encouraging the food-based ministries to prepare for and participate in coordination events. MUCH engagement with the BNNC and support to the FPMU and others to participate helped legitimize and elevate the function of the BNNC.

42. Moreover, *perhaps the most important* adaptation by the MUCH programme was engagement with subnational capacity development even though the programme was not designed for this. The designers intended MUCH to support capacity development of central level officials in agencies working at the subnational level. These agencies would then disseminate FSN policy and programming directives and support implementation. Through deliberation, the MUCH partners agreed to collaborate with the BIRTAN (within the Ministry of Agriculture) to deliver nutrition-related awareness raising at the subnational level. Discussion with implementing partners, participants at the subnational level, and European Union-funded nutrition project participants indicated that this addition was highly appreciated; it was a move in the right direction. Undermined by COVID-19-related restrictions, the activity planned for 2020 was foreshortened, and it was launched late in the programme timeline, yet it reportedly produced stronger awareness of nutrition-related responsibilities and programmes, including the need for district-level multi-stakeholder coordination, among all responsible line ministries. The programme was reduced to one effective day in some locations and was conducted online, and yet feedback was positive and encouraging. This is an indication that this collaboration was in the right direction for enhancing the implementation of policy. Expanding the focus of MUCH to include subnational policy implementation was a strategic move that linked MUCH explicitly to the central core of the policy cycle, implementation.

3.2 EQ 2. Coherence. Compatibility with other interventions in Bangladesh, the FSN sector, or institutions

3.2.1 Building on past efforts

Finding 4. MUCH, while designed to expand on the NFPCSP modality, would have needed a stronger, more strategic shift, and probably more resources and time to have had a sustainable institutional impact on the broader set of nutrition "sensitive" stakeholders (beyond FPMU).

43. As discussed in section 2, the MUCH programme followed on from the ten-year NFPCSP. MUCH was designed and intended to help consolidate capacities built under the earlier programme and to expand the sphere of influence – to enhance the *nutrition* enabling environment by supporting capacity development among additional key sector actors. There were major delays in the project initiation and changes in personnel among main partners so the opportunity to smoothly build on the partnerships and accomplishments of this earlier project was substantially missed (various stakeholders from Government, FAO and the donors expressed this missed opportunity; their comments are explored in more detail in sections 3.6 and 4.5).

44. Productive relationships among the many new implementing team members – FAO advisers, FPMU officers and leaders, donor representatives – took time to form and previously-smooth working arrangements needed re-working. This rebuilding obviously took energy, and the MUCH leadership appears not to have emphasised newer approaches during this period (such as intersectoral collaboration, sector leadership, institutionalization of policy consultations) but repeated the successful NFPCSP focus on working with the FPMU and formal training activities. Having to rebuild working relationships appears to have hindered MUCH from quickly launching the anticipated strategic task of enhancing sustainability of the gains of the NFPCSP.

45. Reports and the FAO administered self-assessment of capacities indicate that these interventions did help further improve the technical skills among FPMU staff and that the tools are useful. However, there was significant repeat with the NFPCSP accomplishments – namely in capacity to produce the annual Country Investment Plan (CIP) monitoring report and to carry out FSN analysis to support policy – rather than quick consolidation and moving on to more strategic issues. The most notable difference from the earlier programme has been MUCH's shift to focus more on nutrition where the NFPCSP focused on other food security dimensions. The addition of nutrition-sensitive (and nutrition-sensitive plus) criteria in the annual analysis is an example of important capacities enhanced through MUCH.

46. Where the MUCH programme engaged with new partners – the BNNC on multi-stakeholder coordination, BIRTAN on subnational engagement, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on women's engagement – MUCH showed promise for broader impact on the FSN enabling environment. However, delays in programme launch, the slow engagement with actors outside of the FPMU, and the continued devotion of major resources to the FPMU meant that the capacity development with these additional stakeholders had neither sufficient time nor depth to mature, leaving the impact mostly at technical practice level rather than at the leadership or institutional level. For example, BIRTAN has not institutionalized the training for subnational stakeholders (no dependable

funds, no pool of dedicated trainers, and while existing trainers are capable, they have competing duties, etc.).

3.2.2 The research-policy nexus

Finding 5. MUCH-supported research contributed important evidence to the FSN policy dialogue and reinforced evidence-based decision-making. However, it is not clear if the FPMU or any other body was supported to build their own capacity to orchestrate this process going forward. In any case, the research-policy nexus requires continued development.

47. "Research was the core of the MUCH design, [it was] intended to connect research and policy making through *ongoing* dialogue" reported a key informant from within the design team. Research had been the cornerstone of the NFPCSP, driving learning and understanding about challenges and identifying opportunities for policy to address them. The MUCH technical assistance team, in consultation with the FPMU, defined 15 research descriptions (TORs) and received 120 proposals. A panel chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Food and co-chaired by the FAO Representative (FAOR) selected seven of the proposals for funding; these included inherently relevant topics such as food safety, nutrient density, assessing food loss and waste, implications of diverse production on diet, links between women's empowerment and children's diets in peri-urban settings, and the relationship between social protection and nutrition. These were all nearing completion as the evaluation came to a close. An earlier FAO-commissioned research project on food composition tables contributed to the CIP2 and NPAN2; the MUCH research component commissioned a study on the nutrient density of foods based on calculations and analysis of the food composition tables, enhancing information and analysis available to policy and programming.

48. Indications show that the research was relevant and useful to policymakers. While a few stakeholders questioned the quality of research or whether the researchers had capacity to frame the results in a way useful to policymakers, the evaluation team considers the research projects appropriate and of sufficient quality to inform policy dialogue processes. MUCH provided helpful technical assistance and encouraged the FPMU to engage productively with the research teams.

49. However, the seven research projects were fewer in number than could be expected (especially considering 120 proposals were received) and the results came too late to be incorporated within project-supported dialogue processes (barring a longer no-cost extension). More of concern is the question of ownership and leadership: while FPMU officers were involved at every stage of the research – from selecting the TORs to approving output – *it was not clear* whether they had an opportunity to practice process leadership or build convening expertise – comments from stakeholders argued both sides. Longer conversations and more detailed capacity and needs assessments would help the stakeholders strategically chart out future collaboration to enhance the research-policy nexus; this could identify distinct roles (respecting the evolving mandates) for the FPMU, research organizations, and technical support organizations including FAO and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

50. Taking a more strategic approach to supporting the research-policy nexus will make an important contribution to a functioning FSN enabling environment going forward. This will include more consistent collaboration among researchers, policymakers and technical support agencies. Rather than a shortcoming for MUCH, enhancing ongoing collaboration

sustainably should be a priority for ongoing collaboration: research implementation appropriately carried out by Bangladesh research and academic institutions; an enhanced "convening" role for the FPMU (and/or other leading policy support units) to identify needs, design TORs (perhaps in collaboration with leading research representatives), and commission the research; and a decreasing role of technical support from international advisers.

3.2.3 Synergies with other programmes

Finding 6. MUCH collaborated effectively with other nutrition projects by involving them in policy consultation processes and policy dissemination efforts. Collaboration was not effectively systematized, due largely to lack of convenient opportunities; leadership could have worked to create more of these opportunities.

51. The MUCH programme was designed as one of three components of a large European Union-funded nutrition programme with the other projects implemented by non-governmental organizations. MUCH was designed to enhance the central level policymaking process while the other components would work at subnational implementation. The European Union advocated to treat the components together as one programme under a joint governing body. The Government formed one steering committee chaired by the Ministry of Food.

52. Other partners in the European Union nutrition programme, in interviews with the evaluation team, expressed strong appreciation for collaboration with MUCH. They expressed appreciation for two distinct MUCH-supported processes: i) inclusive policy consultation processes; and ii) the policy dissemination process undertaken with BIRTAN and involving local implementing partners. As for the first, MUCH technical advisers created space for international NGOs and local partners to participate in national policy dialogue, including them in agendas and incorporating their experiences in briefing material; this amplified the national impact of the partner's subnational work and enhanced the uptake of lessons learned. One stakeholder expressed how the process improved the NPAN2: "The result was a policy document that reflected needs at the local level: special attention for the remotest areas, incentives and support for outreach." This improvement brought those with direct experience working with women and underserved populations in hilly areas closer to the policy process. This not only helped focus government resources, but also created the policy justification for the efforts of partner projects serving remote and underserved populations – effectively creating a mutually reinforcing programme.

53. Main concerns expressed about this collaboration were focused on an impression that it was ad hoc, driven by donors (and technical assistance) rather than local stakeholders, and that there was a good chance it would not sustain past the MUCH programme itself. What they were looking for was a more systematic collaboration mechanism not created by project advisers but rather called for by government policymakers and managed by their teams.

54. To enhance the complementarity of the individual projects and to build support for improved policy, MUCH was combined as one of several projects in an overall nutrition programme supported by the European Union. Combining governance of these projects, while strategic for a larger impact, did not allow for stronger focus on resolving administrative and political challenges for MUCH.

55. MUCH technical assistance also engaged with national dialogue on nutrition-sensitive social protection, organizing a national symposium. This was viewed positively, and various observers noted the importance of linking social protection with food-based nutrition. However, it is not clear that MUCH continued collaboration with the topic and there may be unmet need for coordinated policy research and continued programme development to enhance the linkages.

3.2.4 Broader impact on FSN efforts

56. The evaluation team learned of examples of MUCH innovations being applied in other contexts, influencing the work of FAO and other organizations. One example provided by FAO advisers was that of the Bangladesh CIP2 clarifying and monitoring investments linked to national nutrition and food security programmes and towards SDGs: FAO advisers in Uzbekistan encouraged the Government to similarly complement policy with investment plans. More broadly, MUCH's work on nutrition-sensitive food systems contributes to FAO's international work to position food-based solutions on more sound theoretical and practical foundations within both the global nutrition efforts and global agriculture development; practical research results and policy frameworks supported by MUCH largely contribute to international development.

57. The evaluation team did not evaluate additional evidence on MUCH's broader impact, but we are aware that the technical advisers have been involved in various international conferences and have contributed proactively to the growth of experiential knowledge of food-based solutions to meeting the malnutrition challenge. The programme team can provide more detail on this important aspect of MUCH's larger success.

3.3 EQ 3. Effectiveness. Achievement of objectives

[This evaluation was designed around a modified set of OECD evaluation questions. The main adjustment was to remove "impact" as a distinct category and add "gender and vulnerable groups." Accordingly, this report incorporates findings on impact within the section on effectiveness. These findings are the primary product of using the outcome harvesting methodology.]

3.3.1 Producing outputs

58. This evaluation did not attempt to review each of the MUCH sub-outputs. The annual reports effectively provide this record, and the project final report will complete it. The impression conveyed by multiple stakeholders was that MUCH was very active and engaging at the technical level, producing meaningful work related to all five outputs. The team is impressed with the body of outputs MUCH produced and collectively, the evidence indicates that this body of work substantially contributed to the realization of the MUCH objectives.

3.3.2 Main results and significance

59. Through the process of outcome harvesting, the evaluation received solid evidence on the impact MUCH had from the perspectives of more than 80 stakeholders. By applying a non-leading and participatory interview and discussion process, the team gained direct insight into how stakeholders view MUCH's impact on the FSN enabling environment. What was striking was how consistent the stakeholders were in the topics they identified as significant – although they varied in their evaluation of what went well versus what was challenged.

Also, the stakeholders consistently identified outcomes directly related to the intended five project outcomes. We have taken these findings, and through sense-making and iterative theme identification, formulated six main outcomes (adding one for cross-cutting themes) as follow, with two broken down into smaller sub-outcomes. Included are the main identified outcomes and significance of these outcomes as well as missed opportunities or ongoing opportunities for enhanced impact.

60. It should be noted that missed opportunities are not necessarily failings of the project to deliver on contracted results but shortcomings against expectations or aspirations of some stakeholders. Some of the stakeholder expressed expectations that were entirely within the scope of MUCH – such as cementing the capacities of the FPMU – while others would have required different focus and resources – such as a sustainable mechanism for subnational policy dissemination and capacity building. These "missed" opportunities, therefore, should be understood as opportunities to be considered for revised programming and continued collaboration.

3.3.2.1 Outcome 1: Improved policy framework

Finding 7. MUCH supported substantial improvements in the policy framework, establishing goals, programmes, responsibilities, methods, measures and time frames that position stakeholders to tackle the complex task of advancing towards SDG 2 and the national goal of eliminating malnutrition and food insecurity.

61. Stakeholders expressed strong appreciation for an improved policy framework and the evaluation team assesses the body of policies supported through MUCH as indeed contributing to a stronger enabling framework to eliminate undernutrition and food insecurity. Two main pieces of policy, the Country Investment Plan and the National Plan of Action on Nutrition, are both in their second revision, and both have newly placed emphasis: the first, by adding nutrition as a major focus and the second, by applying the nutrition-sensitive food systems concept. This is a positive development that broadens the resources applied to government efforts to resolve the nutrition challenge, bringing the food producing sectors much more on board at the policy level.

62. MUCH mainly supported the following policy documents: The NPAN2, the CIP2, the NFNSP, and the NFNSP Plan of Action. Added to these policies is the important contribution to monitoring of policy implementation through the CIP monitoring reports produced annually by the FPMU.

63. The quality of these documents is consistently high, with clarity and comprehensiveness. The policy positions agree with recommendations from FAO, position Bangladesh well to advance towards the SDGs, and establish clear responsibilities and goals on critical issues. Specifically, the NPAN2 and CIP2 identify gaps in investments needed to achieve FSN goals. The priority nutrition-sensitive programmes for each stage of the food value chain – "from production to plate" – in the plan acknowledge the multiple dimensions that influence nutrition (Ministry of Food, 2021, p. 7). The inclusion of complementary interventions from all sectors, including health, agriculture, fisheries, livestock, education, and social protection, in the NPAN2 (p. 17) appropriately reflects the complexity of the task at hand.

Finding 8. The policy framework is improved, but implementation requires additional and different support, especially targeted for food-based sectors. MUCH support for the annual monitoring reports is a good step towards closing the policy cycle (linking policymaking with implementation).

64. Policy documents are a critical element within the enabling environment but are only one piece of the policy cycle. Stakeholders consistently recognized both the importance of the MUCH contribution with the improved policy framework, and the outstanding challenge of turning policy into programme action, especially for the complex task of addressing nutrition through food value chains with many moving parts and many different stakeholders and government ministries. Translating improved policy into improved services requires more work, particularly among the key food-related ministries (Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock) in coordination with the broader set of nutrition-related ministries. The main work of these ministries remains to support food production and safety; continued collaboration is needed to ensure they put resources into improved access and utilization of nutritious food.

65. MUCH's support for the annual monitoring reports is a substantial step in the right direction, helping to connect policy development to policy implementation. Providing evidence and analysis on country-wide progress among stakeholders is a critical additional piece of the policy cycle offering key feedback to policymakers and indicating where additional attention is needed. The monitoring reports are widely appreciated.

3.3.2.2 Outcome 2: FSN governance capacities

Finding 9. FPMU technical capacities to gather and analyse FSN evidence to inform policy and programming decisions are stronger and more sustainable than at the start of MUCH.

66. The core of the MUCH programme's impact was intended to be improved capacities for policymaking and monitoring. Here the evaluation found mixed results: improved technical skills and continuing challenges with organizational management practices. The MUCH-supported organizational "self" assessment found substantial improvement in capacities and there is wide agreement that FPMU officers have an improved skill set (especially comparing to the period prior to FAO support so also including the NFPCSP). Comments confirm that officers within the FPMU have a stronger understanding of the productive sector's role in nutrition as well as food security. They can produce the annual CIP monitoring report without external support (though some stakeholders anticipate challenges maintaining quality and adapting as new analysis and measures are needed) and this is demonstrated by the FPMU production of the monitoring report in Bangladesh since 2017.

Finding 10. The productive sector's (nutrition-sensitive) engagement in nutrition coordination needs continued development and support before reaching sustainability as an independent partner in nutrition policy and programming dialogue.

67. Multiple stakeholders – both internal and external – questioned the sustainability of capacity development under MUCH. They pointed to the inevitable movement of lead individuals in and out of positions and departments or units within the Government as a concern – what would happen when the best-trained individuals move on to other positions, or new leadership comes from other sectors without specific training? (Measuring capacities carried forward to new responsibilities is beyond this evaluation's remit).

68. Furthermore, multiple stakeholders identified management and leadership as areas needing additional support. This concern agrees with findings from the MUCH-commissioned institutional capacity needs assessment and the MUCH-organized self-assessment: "In all cases, the capability to monitor activities being implemented on ground

was found to be weak. *Quality management also requires strengthening in all five ministries*. The lack of adequate human resource allocation and leadership issues were flagged by all five ministries" (reported in the 2019 MUCH annual report, p. 15). Unfortunately, this finding came perhaps too late to organize an effective response and the reaction appears to have been limited to formal training opportunities for leaders and managers. In the evaluation team's view, this missed the mark: joint work on improving team management practices, performance-based management approaches, enhancing participation in internal decision-making, and building more accountability and transparency in organizational planning and development among other institutional strategies would have made more lasting impact. It is acknowledged that these are difficult areas to engage with and could meet with resistance. However, in a 14-year long programme, leadership and management practices could have been approached more directly and earlier. The combination of independent findings – from the MUCH reports and comments from diverse stakeholders – enhance the reliability of this finding; leadership and management of the sector remains challenged. This is not a criticism of individual people nor to be addressed by further training of individuals; it is an institutional challenge that needs support at a higher, strategic level for organizational development.

69. An additional area of a concern to the evaluation team is leadership of the productive sector's engagement in nutrition policy dialogue and programming. While MUCH filled an important role and the joint European Union nutrition programming governance offered a unique (but inherently unsustainable) forum, stakeholders expressed a lack of confidence in the long-term viability of mechanisms for coordination and high-level dialogue on nutrition: the thematic teams, the Food Planning and Monitoring Committee, and the Food Policy Working Group. The MUCH-facilitated self-assessment identified similar concerns (p. 5). The evaluation team did not receive evidence that the nutrition-sensitive sector had instituted mechanisms to fulfil its critical role in nutrition policy and programming; continued support is clearly needed.

3.3.2.3 Outcome 3: Enhanced commitment for nutrition

Finding 11. MUCH supported the national elevation of ending malnutrition as a national policy priority. National commitment is strong, as evidenced by increased funding, but delivering on policy will require renewed and reconfigured collaboration.

70. There was consistent and broad agreement from stakeholders who appreciated the role MUCH played in building the Government's enhanced prioritization of eliminating malnutrition. Beyond policy documents, MUCH helped leadership across multiple sectors understand, accept and plan for their sector's role in the efforts. MUCH cultivated commitment to nutrition – through formal dialogue, through research and analysis, through training and cross visits, and through international events – among multiple ministries (notably improving the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Food, and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock engagement in nutrition). This is broadly evidenced by the consistent increases in allocation of national budget for nutrition investment (it is also better tracked than previously thanks to NFPCSP and MUCH support in monitoring of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-sensitive plus investments and investments in women): increasing from just over USD 6 billion to nearly USD 16 billion from 2016 to 2019, as per the 2020 CIP monitoring report.

71. The 2020 CIP2 monitoring report also pointed to concerns that delivery on programmes lags allocation of resources, suggesting that implementation lags policy (Ministry of Food,

2020, p. 138). This is not a surprising finding but does indicate that success in improving the written policy framework can only be translated into improved nutrition realities with new and additional support to programme implementation. The gap, reportedly exceeding 30 percent, indicates substantial effort is needed to support efficient programming.

3.3.2.4 Outcome 4a: Inclusive enabling environment – participation in policy development

Finding 12. MUCH supported a more inclusive policy development and monitoring process, building good technical practice. Systematizing the improvements will require longer duration efforts.

72. Multiple stakeholders complimented MUCH for its support of an inclusive development processes for the CIP2 and NFNSP. One stakeholder explained clearly how improvements have made it easier for civil society stakeholders to provide input into policy decisions: "Overall… there is a positive trend, compared with 20 years back – it is much more flexible and accommodating and listening more."

73. However, this same stakeholder and others as well also indicated they did not have full confidence that this was sustainable. They reported the changes appeared at times "ad hoc and unsystematized." While the FPMU willingly engaged with other stakeholders and made space for inclusive participation, it was not clear if government leadership is committed to this approach. Other stakeholders expressed their concerns that it seemed donors were still driving the process, with committees (such as the programme steering committee) organized around donor needs rather than government needs. MUCH did support the thematic working groups for investment monitoring and established a practice of strong technical collaboration. The evaluation team recognizes the challenge of effecting change, with a relatively small project, in the institutional culture of policy development, so the recommendations of the team will reflect the need for a balanced approach.

3.3.2.5 Outcome 4b: Inclusive enabling environment – subnational capacities

Finding 13. The FAO partnership with BIRTAN for subnational awareness raising – on nutrition policy and mandates for coordination – demonstrated the potential of continued and sustained collaboration for subnational implementation of food-based solutions.

74. MUCH was not designed to directly support subnational capacity development, but rather to engage with the ministries that directly support policy implementation, specifically the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. Only towards the end of the planned implementation period did MUCH support policy dissemination and awareness building at the subnational level in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture's BIRTAN. This collaboration reached 355 participants from Upazilas and 80 from districts but has yet to cover half of the country's administrative areas. This effort raised awareness about policy mandates and responsibilities for coordinated action on nutrition at the district and Upazila levels among relevant line ministries. The session only lasted one or two days and was carried out virtual rather than in-person, due to COVID-19. Nonetheless, it was a good move and demonstrated the potential of stronger partnerships with agencies active at the subnational level.

75. Stakeholders in the evaluation team's subnational focus group discussion acknowledged the benefits of MUCH-BIRTAN collaboration on nutrition policy implementation,

recognizing access to new information and important insights into mandates. They also expressed that more should be done to make resources accessible over the long-term: they suggested to develop a built-in training mechanism with a more sustainable resource pool using field level experts with experiential nutrition knowledge. One of the stakeholders also pointed out that some experts (non-transferable lecturers in educational institutes) are also accessible at the Upazila level.

76. Given how small the time investment by MUCH was, it is impressive to have generated such strong appreciation and wide interest. This is a good partnership, with MUCH bringing important policy and technical perspective while BIRTAN offers both nutrition expertise and training methods experience. This was only a start and came very late in the programme during a difficult period but demonstrated an important opportunity.

3.3.2.6 Outcome 4c: Inclusive enabling environment—multi-stakeholder collaboration

Finding 14. Multi-stakeholder collaboration practices are improved at the technical level (information sharing, joint reporting) but more effort is needed to establish an agreed mechanism (or mechanisms) for joint programme planning and coordination, both within the food-based sector and among all nutrition stakeholders.

77. Virtually every stakeholder interviewed for the evaluation commented on the state of multi-stakeholder coordination for nutrition in Bangladesh; all noted substantial outstanding challenges. Stakeholders did appreciate the cooperation MUCH supported at the technical level: collaboration on the annual monitoring reports, more consultation on policy development, more information sharing. One stakeholder pointed out that, "Each ministry had been doing its own work and now they are brought together, they are talking to each other." Another acknowledged the gains and also the limitations: "The monitoring report evidences very good active collaboration among ministries. Limited to information sharing (no joint analysis, planning, coordinated action, etc.)." This reflects a common concern: that MUCH did support improvements but not as deep as they could be: various stakeholders share information, but they do not engage in strong joint analysis and development of joint recommendations for improvements going forward.

78. Stakeholders consistently identified the weak points as collaboration among sector leaders and in establishing coordination mechanisms. When MUCH was launched, the BNNC was not active but became so quickly. This presented both an opportunity and a challenge: MUCH was designed to work with new and multi-sector stakeholders, but MUCH was based within the FPMU and implicitly supporting the FPMU role as an organizer of multi-stakeholder dialogue on FSN. In the evaluation team's discussion with BNNC officers and others, it appears that these contradictions were never fully addressed, and stakeholders do not yet buy into a common mechanism. Bridging the gap between the food-based sector and the health sector remains an outstanding challenge. It is evident that there are spheres for collaboration: within the food-based sectors (the nutrition-sensitive sector) and among the food-based sector and the health sector (nutrition-specific). It is also evident that outstanding challenges remain to both spheres but that these challenges are distinct, with the second sphere posing issues of methodological and cultural differences while the former is more about aligning mandates.

3.3.2.7 Outcome 5: Evidence for FSN policy and programme – research-policy nexus

Finding 15. MUCH supported an effective process to engage quality research to inform policy decision makers with sound evidence and new findings. Questions of the sustainability and systematization of the research and uptake process still remain.

79. As discussed in section 3.2, MUCH supported seven research projects to address policy information gaps. Interested stakeholders expressed appreciation for the topics and engagement of the research agencies. The MUCH team also contracted a one-off project to inform the NPAN2 formulation with research on food composition tables, a separate research process.

80. FAO advisers acknowledged occasional challenges in mobilizing appropriate technical oversight and FAO technical assistance support, especially given the COVID-19 restrictions (but even without them, accessing quality technical support for research within the expansive and complex FAO headquarters was already reportedly challenging),[1] yet the overall quality of the research appears constructive. Researchers were encouraged and supported to interpret findings in a way accessible to policymakers. MUCH organized forums for multiple stakeholders to discuss the research needs and will do so again to discuss the findings.

81. Stakeholders expressed questions about whether these dialogue sessions were sufficiently accessible and inclusive to all stakeholders – especially to subnational stakeholders. They also suggested there may have been insufficient investment of decision makers within Ministry of Food and other production-oriented ministries to ensure ownership of the results. This evaluation is not able to make a final assessment on either of these issues and would suggest that continued collaboration consider both questions: is participation in the policy-research dialogue open (and affordable) to all the right stakeholders? Are leaders within the policymaking environment sufficiently invested in framing research questions to naturally take up findings?

82. Other than these outstanding questions, the evaluation team has an overall positive impression of the research process and the arrangements to bring results into policy dialogue (especially the support to researchers to develop policy briefs from their findings). The important question for the evaluation team is whether the process of designing and commissioning and then facilitating incorporation of findings in policy dialogue is sufficiently owned by ministry and research professionals to become a sustainable collaboration. This remains an outstanding question – separate from resources – worth continued discussion.

83. In addition to support to research and reporting, MUCH added to the evidence base for policy dialogue by supporting capacity development for the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis. The IPC website shows analysis for 28 districts, and MUCH reportedly supported analysis for all 64 districts. Using the tool, MUCH helped the country map districts with chronic food insecurity to inform policy and programming,

[1] Beyond the evaluation team's remit, but the comments included reference to the inherent challenge of knowing which department or unit within the FAO to turn to for support, but also the willingness and availability of technical support once contacts are set up. Examples given related to the FAO Investment Centre (CFI) providing strong support to the NFPCSP for food security but stepping back from supporting MUCH on nutrition-sensitive agriculture: FAO persons interviewed expressed a challenge knowing where to turn to for the best support within FAO headquarters.

helping highlight districts most in need. Training and workshops improved understanding among government officials. It is highly likely that continued support would be needed to apply this highly complex and technical tool, to expand coverage and detail, and to keep results up to date.

3.3.2.8 Outcome 6a: Cross-cutting themes—women's empowerment

Finding 16. MUCH covered the basic elements of promoting gender-sensitive FSN policy and monitoring but has opportunity to apply lessons learned in promoting women's leadership, decision-making opportunities and gender equality.

84. MUCH's gender assessment, dating back to 2016, promotes the inclusion of gender considerations in policy and training activities. MUCH supported inclusion of gender within all policy documents and monitoring processes. It supported inclusion of gender-specific data within annual monitoring reports. Within subnational activities supported by MUCH, women and girls were beneficiaries in all 12 districts. Around 30 percent of government trainees in MUCH-supported activities centrally were women. MUCH has supported inclusion of the FAO-developed indicator Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) in FSN monitoring creating a readily understood indicator with a manageable data collection process. Including a dedicated section on the MDD-W within the annual monitoring report helps highlight the focus on women and elevates the importance of supporting dietary diversity for women throughout the country.

85. All of these developments were positive and anticipated. The evaluation team also considered the gender evaluation question from the 2021 OECD criteria: "Is there both capacity and commitment from different stakeholder groups to *create and uphold an enabling environment for gender equality and women's empowerment* over the medium to long term?" None of the stakeholders interviewed expressed that they saw MUCH strongly promoting policy to support women's empowerment in agriculture or positioning women as a main driver in nutrition.

86. The review team, supported by statements from several well-placed stakeholders, found the MUCH programme missing an opportunity to advance women's empowerment in agriculture. Given the strong gender dimension to food insecurity and malnutrition in Bangladesh (Sraboni *et al.,* 2014), and taking up the FAO Policy on Gender Equality, MUCH could have positioned equality and women's empowerment more strongly within the FSN dialogue and programming.

87. Several stakeholders expressed the hope that MUCH could more support women in leadership even more at all levels, and support advancement of women to higher tiers of decision-making (from household and village on up to central ministries), rather than measuring success as the percent of women participants. Such a move is supported by research showing empowerment gaps for women in leadership and resource control at the local level (ibid., 11). Literature shows a strong gender dimension to food insecurity and malnutrition in Bangladesh and leadership is identified as the most promising area for policy intervention (ibid., 32). Therefore, MUCH could have supported women in leadership/management in the mid-level positions in food and agriculture sectors, through training, promotion, advocacy, or other policy initiatives.

88. At the technical level, the evaluation team received feedback that *nutrition guidance and instruction tools*, while useful and informative, would be more empowering and supportive

of *gender equity* if accompanied by training or awareness building on how to incorporate gender empowerment within the context of nutrition. The evaluation team did not find this supportive material. Incorporating lessons learned on gender equity is an *ongoing process* and can help grassroot or other organizations better utilize existing tools. Policy can include stronger direction for women's empowerment and efforts to support positive application in marginalized communities.

3.3.2.9 Outcome 6b: Cross-cutting themes—youth engagement

Finding 17. MUCH supported innovative approaches for engaging students in nutrition learning activities with a good chance of sustaining within academia going forward.

89. MUCH contributed to an innovative methodology that engages youth and builds their leadership skills on nutrition: Nutrition Clubs for those studying nutrition-related subjects in universities and colleges. These students have the opportunity to participate in Nutrition Olympiad and Nutrition Challenge Badge competition. These efforts highlight the opportunity to elevate nutrition knowledge within society and especially to the next generation and offer prospects for sustainability where they work with existing education institutions. These programmes started in 2019, and the COVID-19 pandemic started shortly after, forcing students to work from home. They missed the opportunity for face-to-face interaction, but, on the other hand, they reported that preparing their presentations and practical nutrition knowledge-related tasks at home gave them the opportunity to involve their family members.

90. Stakeholders gave conflicting assessments on the sustainability of this activity, with some concerned it was too expensive. The evaluation team identified two avenues for sustaining this work with youth: the specific methodology of engaging youth through competitions may be taken up in projects funded through other mechanisms and, more importantly, *the clubs may be embedded* within the curriculum and extracurricular activities within academic institutions – those studying nutrition or related topics could sustain the clubs in their colleges/universities/schools without any external funding. Another good example: with the involvement of the Ministry of Education was that nutrition messages were added strategically within textbooks, and this could continue at no additional cost.

3.3.3 Strengthened enabling environment for FSN

91. This collection of six outcomes represents a major contribution to an improved enabling environment for FSN in Bangladesh. Perhaps the most fundamental impact is the role MUCH played in moving policy and commitment from ensuring sufficient food availability for the country through production, to eliminating malnutrition and food insecurity throughout the country through production, access and utilization of diverse foods. This elevated commitment was commented on repeatedly by stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation.

92. Similarly, the technical support provided by MUCH substantially improved the details and thoroughness of *policy and monitoring* of food-based approaches to nutrition. For example, progress towards nutrition is more carefully reported within the CIP2 monitoring reports, policies include detailed goals, and the CIP2 identifies sector-by-sector investments needed to address the multiple facets of malnutrition. The evaluation team received strong impressions from many stakeholders that capacities improved, especially

among technical officers in the FPMU but also within the other key ministries, to produce and present more complete technical analysis to inform policy dialogue.

93. The strongest concerns have to do with the missed opportunity to have elevated the discussion among sector leaders and to have instituted formal mechanisms and processes for more inclusive policy dialogue, an enhanced research-policy nexus, and cross-sectoral collaboration – within food-based sectors and among all nutrition stakeholders. It is acknowledged that these are difficult, long-term institutional issues to address and thus highlighted as objectives for continued collaboration and dialogue.

94. An additional essential part of the FSN enabling environment, while not the specific focus for MUCH, is subnational programme implementation. MUCH was only designed to address this by influencing priorities within ministries already active delivering services at the subnational level. This approach proved too subtle: it did not lead to substantial investment by the project in supporting these ministries to translation policy into subnational programmes; neither did it lead to monitoring and reporting of slow progress and discussion of adjustments. The European Union pushed the MUCH programme to employ more explicit support to subnational capacities and this resulted in good progress – the partnership with BIRTAN for subnational nutrition-sensitive policy awareness building. While this adjustment came too late and was too limited to have lasting institutional impact, it demonstrated important possibilities – of how partnerships can help bridge the policy-implementation gap – and should provide strong evidence for new programme directions.

Table 3. Summary of outcomes

Key outcome area		Key enhancement
Improved policy framework…	----->	…elevated nutrition among government priorities and established food-based solutions as central to eliminating malnutrition and food insecurity.
Technical capacities among key agencies and among individuals improved…	----->	…improved information sharing, analysis, reporting and evidence within policy development and programming.
Enhanced commitment for nutrition…	----->	…secured ongoing resources to meet SDG 2.
Inclusive enabling environment – participation in policy development…	----->	…opened the door to more participation of civil society and subnational stakeholders, improving policy outcomes for disadvantaged communities and women.
Inclusive enabling environment – subnational capacities…	----->	…strengthened awareness of enhanced position of nutrition in line ministry responsibilities.
Inclusive enabling environment – multi-stakeholder collaboration…	----->	…established collaboration among technical teams for information sharing and joint analysis; lays the foundations for future strengthening.
Improved evidence for FSN…	----->	…provided policymakers with new evidence to fill important policy gaps.
Promotion of gender concerns in policy…	----->	…included gender participation targets in policy and disaggregated monitoring, improving the visibility of gender elements of FSN challenges.
Development of new approaches to engaging youth in nutrition…	----->	…charted new courses with strong promise for continued engagement of future generations in meeting SDG 2.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team.

3.4 EQ 4. Long-term changes and sustainability. The extent to which benefits are likely to continue

3.4.1 Sustainability of impact

Finding 18. MUCH supported technical capacity development across a wide range of actors and improved the practice of coordination, laying the foundations for future support to more sustainable, institutional mechanisms and processes.

95. Among the various concerns expressed by stakeholders interviewed, the most consistent was doubt about the sustainability of MUCH impact. Stakeholders variously questioned whether, without continued FAO support, the FPMU could continue high quality analysis and reporting on monitoring of the CIP2, policy consultation would continue to be inclusive (especially for subnational and civil society actors), information would be consistently shared and joint analysis would continue to inform policy, high quality research would inform policy development, youth engagement would continue apace, and multi-stakeholder coordination would continue to improve.

96. To start with, no stakeholders questioned the Government's commitment to ending malnutrition and food insecurity. Not only did the MUCH collaboration contribute to this political commitment, but it helped define the details. The body of policy documents MUCH supported help define what this commitment means across multiple sectors and multiple actors. It also provides firm footing translating the policy into specific programming investments.

97. The *prospective* sustainability ("the net benefits for key stakeholders that are likely to continue into the future" [OECD, 2021, p. 72]) of improved policy and coordination *practices* will depend largely on both personnel and institutional dynamics. MUCH's successes with improved individual capacities contribute to effective implementation in the short-term, but the challenges the programme had institutionalizing improved practices pose sustainability questions.

98. The thematic groups present an opportunity for continued technical collaboration, but its own capacity assessment raised questions about commitment and leadership there. The lack of coordination mechanisms suggest progress bringing multiple sectors together will need continued support. Similarly, inclusive consultation remains pushed by technical officers and advisers, and ad hoc according to many stakeholders, so probably will similarly need additional support to take root in the long-term.

99. The evaluation team assesses sustainability as a mixed bag, with some very promising elements – the overall government commitment to nutrition – some good elements – technical collaboration on data sharing and reporting – and some with the seeds for sustainability needing further cultivation – inclusive policy practices, research-policy nexus, and multi-sector collaboration. MUCH had strategic accomplishments here but significant gains remain in need of support to be solidified.

3.5 EQ 5. Gender and vulnerable groups. Supporting gender equality and benefits for vulnerable groups

Finding 19. MUCH supported inclusion of gender considerations within the key policy documents, including targets and disaggregated monitoring, but there was room for greater emphasis **–** in policy and programming, in culture and practice **–** emphasis on gender equity and women in leadership.

100. MUCH is appreciated by field level stakeholders for its promotion of policy that more fully considers vulnerable geographic groups in Bangladesh. The 2020 monitoring report includes a highlight on the situation for the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, calling for additional FSN support for this most disadvantaged group. The IPC provides district level data to guide investments to appropriate jurisdictions. However, as already discussed in section 3.3 (Outcome 6a), support for gender equity, while present within MUCH outcomes, has not raised the bar as far as advocated in FAO policy documents (such as the most recent FAO Policy on Gender Equality [FAO, 2020]). This leaves the opportunity open and indicates an imperative to emphasize gender equity in ongoing collaboration for policy development and programming.

3.6 EQ 6. Efficiency of the implementing strategy. Economic and timely delivery of results

Finding 20. While MUCH met all outcomes within the logical framework, outstanding challenges combine to indicate not fully reaching strategic programme potential for lasting institutional impact on the FSN enabling environment – i.e. solidifying policy consultative processes, establishing multi-stakeholder mechanisms, and enhancing translation of policy into programmes. This is at least partly attributable to a collection of administrative and bureaucratic shortcomings among the partnership, with responsibility falling to all partners including FAO, donors and the Government of Bangladesh.

101. MUCH was beleaguered by administrative and bureaucratic challenges from the beginning:

i. The programme that preceded MUCH, which was completed at the end of 2014, was widely recognized for the excellent team it put together and the collaboration among partners, but almost all the leaders left before MUCH started or shortly afterwards, including key members within the FPMU.
(This can largely be attributed to natural human resources [HR] changes.)
ii. MUCH officially started early in 2015 (technical start date in April) but it took most of 2015 to recruit and get the Chief Technical Officer on-board.
(Caused by a combination of complicated interaction between FAO recruitment and Government of Bangladesh approval steps).
iii. Agreement with the European Union for its share of the joint funding was not formalized until 2017 – FAO leaders expressed that they were initially operating on a conservative assumption that the European Union share of funds might not materialize.
(Caused by strategic integration of MUCH with a larger programme.)
iv. The programme had no steering committee until 2018.
(MUCH principals waited until the larger European Union programme was fully formed and approved.)

v. Once formed, the steering committee served three integrated nutrition-focused, European Union-funded projects.
(Agreed by MUCH principals.)

vi. The technical team was never fully recruited, and many positions were filled with consultants rather than with project staff.
(International recruitment was *reportedly* challenging because of perceived political instability, and the FAO process was complex and inefficient – see section 4.5.)

vii. Accounting procedures for expenditures were apparently not fully agreed leading to some confusion and frustration – although there was never any suspicion of wrongful expenditure, just unsynchronized accounting systems and delays in reconciliation.
(FAO administration and donor accounting systems were difficult to match.)

102. In the words of one key informant: MUCH was "bogged down in admin stuff rather than focusing on major elements of the project." The evaluation team had neither the mission nor the resources to investigate the details of administrative challenges. However, the impacts of the challenges were expressed by many of the implementing partners (within FAO and the Government, among the donors) to lead the evaluation team to conclude that this collection of administrative challenges was at least partly if not largely to blame for some of the ways MUCH fell short of programmatic expectations.

103. It is important here to consider the complexity and dynamism of managing a multifaceted capacity development project aimed at impacting an enabling environment. In the best of situations, project leadership can react quickly to new opportunities, align stakeholders with new and evolving interests, and strategically position activities to anticipate new points of entry (Jones, 2011, describes this dynamic process of influencing policy). If a project leader is occupied managing various administrative tasks and not concentrating on strategic alliances with government and donor partners, the task in addressing strategic opportunities is complicated. If these administrative tasks go smoothly and an effective forum for project governance is quickly established, project leaders can more strategically allocate resources for lasting institutional impact. The collection of administrative inefficiencies encountered by MUCH directly translated into accumulated programmatic challenges that combine to reveal a missed strategic opportunity, as detailed below.

Table 4. Summary of outstanding challenges

Expressed expectations were…		**…outstanding challenges**
MUCH would cement FPMU capacities to lead inclusive policy development processes…	----->	…inclusive processes remain ad hoc and FPMU remains a technical participant and not a process leader.
MUCH would work with core ministries to address the policy-implementation gap….	----->	…core ministries not fully engaged in supporting subnational FSN capacities.
MUCH would have FPMU as entry point to support systemic coordination with formal mechanisms…	----->	…multi-sector coordination remains ad hoc with weak, undefined or unaccepted leadership roles.
MUCH would help establish more formal research-policy links and forums…	----->	…the research-policy nexus remains weak with undeveloped opportunities.
MUCH would build organizational capacities with better systems, mechanisms and processes…	----->	…capacity development focused on individuals, missing organizational development opportunities: leadership and management.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Relevance. MUCH design was relevant and appropriate to the opportunities present at launch and the programme adapted to new opportunities well. There remains a strong need for dedicated support to food-based solutions to nutrition challenges.

104. The programme objectives and approach were entirely relevant to the needs and interest of the Government of Bangladesh, from the Prime Minister's Office to the smaller collaborating units within line ministries. This allowed the programme to work effectively and with good cooperation at the technical level to flesh out the details of the national shift to emphasizing nutrition, and to do this, importantly, within the food- and production-related sectors.

105. When MUCH was designed the BNNC was not yet active, so the programme was situated within the same partner of the precursor project, the FPMU of the Ministry of Food. This was appropriate and helpful as a starting place. However, the intended shift to expand to additional partners was not realized as fully as hoped. Still, this evaluation finds that it was and still is entirely appropriate for FAO with support from donors, to be working heavily with the food-related sectors. This is the strength of FAO and it is also a strong need for the Government of Bangladesh, as reflected in the National Plan of Action for Nutrition which calls for the food-related ministries to collaborate extensively.

106. While policy elevates the BNNC which is within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as the overall coordinator for nutrition, policy and reality require a continued level of strong collaboration among the nutrition "sensitive" sectors which in turn can engage the higher level coordination platform.

107. Adapting to new opportunities, the MUCH programme did provide support for the BNNC, and did collaborate on subnational capacity development with BIRTAN. These were important adaptations that could have been taken on earlier, but nonetheless were important to the success and laying groundwork for future collaboration. MUCH partners all adapted impressively to realities under the pandemic-related restrictions; while work slowed and some may not be complete, the partners strengthened their communication and relationships and continued to innovate and carry out important work.

Conclusion 2. Coherence. MUCH collaborated meaningfully with other nutrition-related projects, leveraging their field level experience to improve policy processes. Unfortunate delays prevented MUCH from taking advantage of the spring-board effect of following closely after the successful NFPCSP, and did not leverage the openings of that project as well as hoped for, particularly for strategic access to leaders and additional partners. The research-policy nexus was only strengthened through the work of specific research projects without an improved mechanism for collaboration among policymakers and research agents.

108. As part of the European Union-funded programme of projects working on nutrition, MUCH provided the other, field level implementing projects, important access to central level policymaking processes. The effort was reportedly effective and led to policy better incorporating needs at subnational level with focus on hilly areas and underserved communities. However, stakeholders reported that it remained ad hoc and more responsive to donors than local stakeholders.

109. The MUCH programme followed closely after the successful ten-year NFPCSP and was set up to start out working with the same partners. Administrative and bureaucratic delays created a bigger gap than planned and momentum was lost, leaving the MUCH team having to restart the collaboration, reform working relationships, and rebuild access to important, high-level decision makers. Thus, springing from the success of the prior programme into deeper engagement with a broader set of stakeholders did not materialize as hoped.

110. Similarly, MUCH supported a promising set of research projects anticipated to provide important evidence for ongoing food-oriented policymaking. The research is well set up and positioned to feed into policy dialogue. However, the overall process among policy agencies and research organizations appears ad hoc and evidence suggests that the FPMU and other government stakeholders did not have the opportunity to develop research convening and leading experience.

Conclusion 3. Effectiveness. MUCH successes, as captured by the outcome harvesting approach, corresponded closely with the five MUCH outputs with substantial progress among all. Gains at the technical level are impressive and technical capacities are improved. However, substantial work remains to institutionalize the improved practices for policy consultation and multi-sector collaboration.

111. On each of the intended outputs, the MUCH programme produced well-respected and appreciated impact. The outputs were consistently recognized as significant and important to the stakeholders' ongoing work. The nutrition policy framework is vastly improved with a clear role outlined for food-related ministries and closer links among stakeholders. Technical capacities among stakeholders are stronger than before, both for producing evidence for policy dialogue and monitoring implementation. Perhaps the strongest of all impact was the Government's commitment to continue support for nutrition, and eliminating malnutrition and food insecurity is strong.

112. The policymaking process is more inclusive than before, although observers worried gains may not be yet solidified as accepted practice. Ministries are more versed engaging with subnational authorities on the topic of nutrition, but this needs continued support to turn into genuine capacity enhancement and improved services.

113. Multi-stakeholder collaboration is better than when MUCH started, with information sharing and joint work on monitoring and reporting technically improved. There is more awareness and interest in collaboration with information exchange leading the way. There is not yet an agreed and uniformly accepted mechanism for coordination: nutrition-sensitive stakeholders do not yet have a clear process for getting together, and the larger nutrition sector is not yet unified around a mechanism. MUCH helped lay technical groundwork, but more follow-up is needed.

114. Evidence is more available and accessible for FSN policymaking, with better data at the subnational level and from all sectors. The annual CIP2 monitoring report was consistently mentioned as a useful tool for policymakers and others working to influence policy. Research for policy was supported less than anticipated under MUCH, but the eight research projects funded have good prospects to positively impact policy. The research-policy process would have benefited from more attention by MUCH to strengthening sustainable mechanisms and building leadership capacity.

115. MUCH included gender in policy document development and monitoring reports. However, emphasis on *gender equality* in FSN was not strong. Engaging youth through nutrition was a successful MUCH innovated approach with prospects that the nutrition clubs and awards will be continued within academia.

Conclusion 4. Long-term changes and sustainability. MUCH had a significant impact on the trajectory of FSN in Bangladesh and built technical skills to match political commitment. Mechanisms and systems for coordination, subnational engagement, and the research-policy nexus, if pushed stronger by MUCH leadership would have strengthened sustainability.

116. There is strong evidence that the MUCH programme contributed to a genuine shift in commitment by the Government towards eliminating malnutrition and food insecurity. The technical details and skills are largely in place to continue sector-level progress towards this trajectory. MUCH also contributed to the leadership commitment to these goals. The challenge remains to institutionalize strategic processes – inclusive policymaking, multi-sector collaboration (within the food-oriented sector as well as the full nutrition stakeholders), and an improved research-policy nexus. Stakeholders expressed confidence that the technical officers are interested to maintain and even expand good practices, but there are outstanding questions about the level of institutional and sector-level leadership commitment to these. Formal mechanisms – for planning and collaboration, for policy-research coordination, for subnational policy implementation oversight – are yet to be built up effectively.

117. MUCH effectively worked at the first aspect of capacity development – individual technical – but sustainability would have been better supported with more effort into institutions. This provides a natural progression for continued collaboration.

Conclusion 5. Gender and vulnerable groups. The inclusive policy process MUCH supported allowed subnational stakeholders with experience working with women and underserved populations in hilly areas to help shape policy. The reported impact was policy that leveraged more resources and created better opening for projects to work with these vulnerable populations. Gender equity remains in need of stronger elevation.

118. The inclusive process reportedly improved policy design to support vulnerable groups, with objectives and resources targeted for poorer and less food secure communities. Incorporation of gender issues – both with objectives and monitoring – improved with MUCH support. On both issues, there is more work to be done to elevate policy. Women in leadership at all levels is an important goal still to be widely accepted and supported.

Conclusion 6. Efficiency. The MUCH programme managed resources well but was hindered by bureaucratic delay and inefficiency. This undermined timely delivery of outputs and diminished the ability of leaders to engage strategically with counterparts.

119. While all sides displayed consistent commitment to the collaboration, MUCH was beset by delays from early mobilization of leadership and technical assistance, no steering committee established till late in the project, lack of clarity on full funding – and this undermined meeting deadlines and, ultimately, the strategic capacity support. Specific policy documents, especially the CIP2, were seriously delayed. Rushing to complete outputs, such as specific training measures, put them in front of important strategic tasks such as capacity assessments. Stronger mentorship among technical advisers and government officers did not have full time to mature, weakening the institutionalization of good practice. Engagement of government leadership among all sectors, reportedly was

slower than expected and this could also partly have undermined the efforts for both multi-sector collaboration and adoption of mechanisms for joint planning and monitoring.

Conclusion 7. MUCH generated important lessons both from what went right and what needed adjustments. These lessons will help inform ongoing and future collaboration within Bangladesh and internationally.

120. Important lessons from success include:

i. Positioning technical programmes to *build on and enhance political momentum*, taking advantage of policy windows, can dramatically enhance overall programme influence on policy. MUCH helped give meaning and detail to the readiness of country leadership to leverage success with rice production into addressing nutrition, creating a policy framework and improved enabling environment out of a political opening.
ii. Technical assistance, useful in itself, can also *lay the foundations from which to engage management* and sector leadership. MUCH heavily invested in technical capacity development, creating the opening for engaging with institutional, management and leadership of the sectors. It is important to plan and design for that next step of leveraging technical collaboration into institutional areas.
iii. The *food systems approach* to nutrition leverages traditional interest and technical strength within the food production sector to bring resources and energy into solving nutrition challenges. MUCH promoted a food system approach to nutrition, working with value chains, and captured interest and commitment within several ministries to prioritize work on nutrition.
iv. Innovations in monitoring and reporting on nutrition work can strengthen the policy cycle and focus additional attention on promising investments. MUCH developed the *nutrition-sensitive plus* category allowing more detailed analysis and reporting, recognizing and building more support for programmes designed explicitly to improve nutrition outcomes.
v. Engaging youth in nutrition work adds generational impact and gives an important opening for agriculture to work with youth (a critical population group that has been persistently difficult for agriculture to attract).

121. Important lessons from ongoing challenges include:

i. Agreement among programme leaders is essential to strong launches and accessing strategic new partners. MUCH partners struggled to start up the steering committee and other informal mechanisms did not appear to substitute in developing the needed consensus among leaders. Delays in establishing a productive dialogue forum(s) and making formal arrangements overly complicated hindered MUCH for nearly three years.
ii. Ownership of programme goals and processes is essential for long-term impact and sustainability. Local partners need to have the opportunity and be supported with capacities to take leadership roles and manage substantial parts of programmes, all while maintaining accountability and transparency (good joint visions and governance are important here as well).
iii. Vested interests among stakeholders, if addressed early, can build ownership and commitment, but, if left unresolved, can undermine collaboration, decrease efficiency, and risk project progress. Addressing unproductive interests requires engagement with leadership and innovative approaches.

iv. The FAO HR process created hurdles to mobilizing quality technical assistance for MUCH. This undermined the project impact. FAO, to realize its potential and to continue to make its essential contribution to FSN, must be able to efficiently mobilize and manage high quality technical assistance for appropriate durations.

4.2 Recommendations

122. This set of recommendations builds directly on the findings presented in the body of the report. Specifically, they collectively would address the concerns listed in the lessons learned (section 4) and enhance the opportunities to have sustainable impacts, addressing the shortcomings identified in section 3.3.

Recommendation 1. Continue the collaboration with emphasis on institutional development. Continue collaboration among the MUCH stakeholders with greater focus on Bangladesh ownership and participation among the broad set of food-based stakeholders. Continued collaboration should be less focused on individual skills development and shift towards an emphasis on institutional development through promotion of formal working groups, formal policy consultation processes, and management and coordination systems. It would be ideal if *both donors* continued support. It is essential for *FAO* to stay centrally engaged in technical and institutional development for FSN. The *FPMU* can remain a central partner but must accept a broader coalition of policy and programming units related to food production, processing and utilization in the other ministries also benefiting from capacity development and technical support opportunities.

Recommendation 2. Support subnational capacity development *through line ministries* with programmes and tools. Move beyond policy awareness building and support multi-pronged efforts: training on nutrition-related services, support to planning, monitoring and reporting for each sector distinctly, support to collaboration among all nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific actors. *FAO should continue the partnership with BIRTAN* and add additional trainers. Subnational stakeholders suggested regional trainer pools; this should be explored with appropriate government agencies. Apply cross-training opportunities, building on the successes and expertise of the European Union-supported subnational nutrition projects within the Programme for Improved Nutrition, by bringing regions together in coordinated exchange sessions.

Recommendation 3. Directly address the need for improved multi-sector collaboration by working towards a formalized nutrition-sensitive (sub)sector collaboration mechanism. This should include *FAO providing capacity development and technical support to a sub-set of food-based agencies* – ideally in a formalized government-established food-based nutrition working group building on the thematic groups – and then supporting these to engage collectively with the BNNC (this is explicitly called for in the NPAN). This will play to FAO strengths and sector interests and promote balance among the broad nutrition stakeholders (separate support should be designed for the *BNNC*). Support to multi-sector collaboration should involve both inclusive policy development processes (balancing interests of Government, local civil society and donors) and programme planning and monitoring.

Recommendation 4a. Enhance engagement with social protection policy and programming by continuing support for policy-research dialogue, liaising with key partners nationally, including the World Food Programme (WFP), and ensuring food-based solutions remain central. *FAO and the food-related ministries* should be consistently active in policy and programming dialogue to ensure links between social protection programmes and local food systems.

Recommendation 4b. Support localized research for policy efforts by building research convening capacity within central government ministries – emphasize that advisers only advise, while *the FPMU* (or other appropriate agency) take the lead. *Research agencies* – the universities and even private research institutes – should continue to implement the research commissioned by the ministries. Stronger dialogue leading up to research should involve national leading researchers from the universities in a more strategic, less transactional partnership. Government ministry leaders need to be seen as the convenors of research, research agencies as the implementors and co-designers, and FAO and IFPRI as the technical advisers. Government funds are increasing, but there will be continued need for donor support to ensure important policy elements are fully developed.

Recommendation 5. Elevate gender analysis and promote gender equality and women's empowerment as a central element of all work. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) gender experts should be consulted. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs should become a stronger partner, including at subnational levels. Involving civil society – especially the European Union-supported projects – in national continuous dialogue on elevating and supporting women's role in nutrition and leadership is essential. Incorporating gender equality as central dialogue focuses within national FSN dialogue mechanisms is important.

Recommendation 6. Simplify and strengthen programme governance. If programme governance is to be based around the sector, then it should not be limited to one donor's projects but should rather work within a nationalized mechanism. If it is to be limited to specific projects, it should not be sectoral, but just deal with one project. Either will work; the experience of MUCH showed that the hybrid did not work well.

Recommendation 7. FAO needs to streamline HR processes to be able to mobilize strong technical assistance and manage the teams well to provide continuous support for the duration of projects (MUCH found good people, but did so slowly, and then undermined their work with temporary consulting contracts).

Recommendation 8. Deal with ongoing controversy about daily salary, salary top-ups, or other vested interests directly, through high-level discussion, and devise culturally-appropriate solutions that are acceptable (even if not ideal) to all partners. Then implement the solutions transparently. This will allow greater trust from all partners and will also allow greater transfer of ownership to local partners. This needs commitment from *all sides of the collaboration*: donors need to adapt while emphasizing accountability and performance, Government needs to capitalise on donor support and technical assistance to fortify its own accountability and result-oriented management, and FAO needs to strengthen best service management practices while strongly implementing the Paris Agreement' spirit of promoting national ownership.

Recommendation 9. Enhance national ownership of the process by adjusting the modality: utilize more grants to Government and other actors to carry out parts of the project; align grants with national and sector interests through high-level dialogue; ensure technical assistance have sufficient time in their work plans to support local technical officers to carry out the work rather than rushing through and doing the work themselves. This is the work of *all stakeholders*.

5. Lessons learned

123. MUCH was notably successful in various areas that create important lessons for similar projects. It also faced difficulties that remain outstanding challenges and these also offer lessons. The review team worked to understand the factors contributing to both, and lays these out as central lessons. The successes were linked strongly to strategic positioning of the MUCH collaboration within the national movement to elevate nutrition as a policy priority and the complementarity of technical strengths within the FAO technical assistance team and good collaboration with the government partners.

5.1 Lessons from successes

124. Most stakeholders recognized MUCH's success in helping position nutrition as a priority for the productive sectors – agriculture, fisheries and livestock, food. As noted, food security, interpreted as the imperative to produce sufficient food stocks, especially rice, to meet the country's need, has been the overall government target for the past decades. With this goal largely met at the national level, the sector's leaders have been ready for another step. Again, applying the framework developed by Jones (2011) this readiness among government leaders presented a "policy window" and the MUCH strategy can be described, in retrospect, to have been to "connect two or more components of the policy process: the way a problem is defined, the policy solution to the problem…" (p. 5). The description fits well and has explanatory power to the MUCH successes.

125. The MUCH programme helped shape thinking about food security and helped define how nutrition is the next step, with detailed evidence from research and studies, position papers, supporting informed dialogue, and the multiple topical working groups to ensure broad buy-in to the transition. It was not an arbitrary coincidence, but a designed and strategic move for the partnership – the two donors, FAO and the Ministry of Food – to collaborate on shaping the consensus around nutrition, taking advantage of an opening interest among policymakers. The opening was there, but without active support from MUCH, among others, the policy result would not have been as clear, as detailed, nor as supportive of positive programming steps.

Lesson 1. Strategically identify and meet evolving policy windows with broad support for technical capacities, informed policy dialogue and quality research to enhance positive policy directions and maximize uptake of policy and technical inputs.

126. One of the key elements of the food-based approach to nutrition backed by MUCH and adopted by the Government is the food systems approach. MUCH and partners were so successful with developing and identifying this as an appropriate and useful approach that the CIP2's sub-title is "Nutrition-Sensitive Food System". While few stakeholders directly commented on this development, the detailed and diverse elements of the food systems were consistently addressed by the various stakeholders – fisheries sector officer speaking well about how their work at all value chain levels contributes to nutrition, agriculture likewise, etc. The "production to plate" theme is consistently reflected in policy, technical discussions and workshop reports. This fits both the technical need for policy to support improvements across the board as well as the sector's historic affinity for working with value chains.

Lesson 2. Work within technical affinities – in this case market and value orientation of the food production sector – to support new movement towards additional priorities – in this case food-based nutrition solutions. The food systems approach presents a technical link and strategic opportunity.

127. Another specific technical innovation supported by MUCH was the addition of a new category, nutrition-sensitive "plus", to the investment plan and reporting. This allows advisers and monitoring officers to explicitly recognize efforts designed specifically to address nutrition and women. This augments the existing policy cycle with important technical tools and evidence to strengthen the positive feedback loops for political, financial and technical support to nutrition. Prior to this innovation, many investments that were only loosely related to nutrition would be lumped in with investments that were targeted strongly to addressing identified nutrition challenges. This new category allowed monitoring to still include the investments loosely associated with nutrition, while highlighting those designed for better impact on nutrition. Investments in infrastructure that support more production would fall into the general category, while training that enhances production of diverse crops linked to information about the importance of diverse consumption for women – which is backed by evidence to impact nutrition – would receive the "plus" designation. Effectively, this will make the entire policy cycle more nutrition-sensitive with policy positions, programming, application of monitoring tools (like MDD-W), reporting based on the best evidence.

Lesson 3. Support additional pieces of the policy cycle to reinforce positive policy directions – in this case, enhanced nutrition-sensitive monitoring and reporting.

128. While gap analyses and stakeholder comments pointed to the continuing need for work at management and leadership levels, these can be difficult to enter, at least initially. MUCH strategically engaged in technical capacity development and technical support to the sector. This established broad collaboration among the partners and FAO advisers, and linked the donors more directly with technical teams. This reflected positively to leaders and managers, creating openings for future collaboration. MUCH was more focused on individual technical capacities – among the three basic loci of capacity development (individual, institutions, enabling environment) – and lays the foundations for engagement more in the second. The enabling environment, appropriately, is seen as impacted by the collection of efforts.

Lesson 4. While entry points to essential capacity development areas – sector and intersectoral management and leadership – are difficult to create, continued support to technical capacities strengthens relationships and lays the foundations that needs to be consciously built on to generate the strategic and institutional gains.

129. Youth in agriculture is an emerging area of interest for Government, donors and FAO partners. It is a difficult topic as many youth in Bangladesh and similar environments are oriented away from rural economies and agrarian activities. However, nutrition presents a natural way to engage with youth and then to reconnect them with agriculture and food production, processing and preparation. MUCH presented an admirable approach by linking with academia (universities and colleges) and building excitement (Nutrition Olympiad, Nutrition Challenge Badge and awards) and opportunities for ongoing participation nutrition clubs. Youth learning and progress on nutrition brought Bangladesh international recognition and national pride as Bangladesh youth performed well in international nutrition awareness events.

Lesson 5. Combining energy and long-term engagement opportunities for youth engagement in nutrition offers a new opening to linking youth with food and agriculture.

5.2 Implementation challenge 1. Vision for strategic impact

130. The MUCH programme operated without a steering committee and without full agreement on a work plan for approximately three years, of a planned five-year project. The MUCH programme reportedly had difficulty clearing a Chief Technical Adviser to work in the country. The intended outreach to leaders in other ministries and sectors did not proceed as quickly as hoped, limiting the capacity development within those ministries. Improved practices, such as more inclusive policy processes and multi-stakeholder collaboration, were regarded as ad hoc rather than institutionalized change. The MUCH implementing partners reported unresolved disagreements over basic administrative practices such as per-diems, salary top-ups, and purchase of air purifiers.

131. This is a sample of issues, among others, relayed to the evaluation team, that hindered smooth collaboration. Alone, each is minor, but taken together they present obstacles to strategic impact. On each of these issues, a steering committee *could* have brought together leaders to quickly and resolutely push for consensus and improve collaboration. It is acknowledged that a steering committee is not a solution for all challenges and may not have addressed all these challenges. However, in the estimation of the evaluation team, informed by internal stakeholders well-placed to observe the programme deliberations, starting the steering committee early in the programme may well have led to quicker resolution of problems and could have cleared the way for better collaboration with new stakeholders. In the words of one well-connected stakeholder, "Without this blessing [of a steering committee] for three years, it would be hard to go anywhere."

132. More than a slow start-up hindered the functioning of the steering committee. The European Union Delegation had a strong objective of capitalizing on its multifaceted investment in nutrition – three distinct projects with various implementing partners, linked into a programme with one overarching objective. Linking the projects in a joint steering committee was a key part of the strategy to leverage lessons and experience among the projects into policy and programming impact (for example, to have MUCH bring lessons from field level implementation into national policy dialogue). This appears a reasonable and important objective. However, implementation was complicated and tying the governance function of a project to a programme steering committee apparently confused partners and undermined important project-related dialogue.

133. Donor representatives acknowledged the challenges and suggested that towards the end of the programme, members of the steering committee come to better joint understanding. This was supported by statements from government officials as well. Agreement at the end of the project did not help address the barriers faced earlier.

134. Coordinating action towards a strategic vision goes beyond a steering committee. The evaluation team would like to suggest that here, MUCH could benefit from more iterative discussion of the theory of change. Jones summarizes a key lesson: "…literature on planning and M&E in complex settings highlights the importance of M&E to test and reflect on a project's theory of change… …*with ongoing cycles of evaluation, assessment, and adjustment* of change models and activities" (2011, p. 3, emphasis added). MUCH did, indeed, adapt to changing opportunities, especially with the introduction of subnational activities. However,

this did not apparently involve a strategic discussion with programme principals (or in any case this discussion is not highlighted in reports and programme planning). Perhaps this discussion will be part of planning an extension or a second phase, and it could become an explicit part of governance discussions.

135. This would help engage leadership in new, higher-level opportunities as well as build accountability for strategic progress.

Lesson 6. A simple governance structure, formed early and designed to facilitate discussion among project enablers about realizing a vision for impact, can enhance the strategic focus of a project and create accountability among key partners. Without this support, a project may struggle to overcome obstacles to strategic progress.

5.3 Implementation challenge 2. Ownership

136. In several stakeholder interviews, actors expressed strong and sometimes contradictory views about ownership and outcomes of the MUCH programme: "MUCH was led by consultants…. organized by the MUCH team, with the FPMU team following guidelines, not empowered to lead", and further, "FPMU saw it was an FAO project, it meant they lacked ownership over the process." At the same time, an officer within the FPMU reported that the FPMU was, "involved in all activities of MUCH – monitoring report preparation, helped delivering training, policy, plan of action formulation, obtained training."

137. Searching project documents for clarification, the evaluation team found very little report of responsibilities being taken or assumed by local counterparts. Instead, the documents reported leadership by FAO and MUCH technical assistance teams in "consultation" or "collaboration" with the FPMU. While this may be dismissed as a writing style, the sentiment was also consistent in phrasing during interviews with technical advisers. The consistent framing in the reports and interviews suggests that the FAO technical advisory team of consultants played an important role designing, leading, writing, facilitating, proposing, and framing the process of improving the enabling environment. Government partners evidenced participation, learning, collaboration and being consulted.

138. Literature suggests this balance should have been reversed, or at least shifted over time, especially for a capacity development effort focused on policy influence.[2] Stakeholders identified issues such as setting the direction of research, control over project funds, and even specific policy formulations as areas of concern for the lack of local ownership. Greater strategic focus on shifting control, influence, and decision-making authority to the local partners could have given a new dynamic for MUCH and enhanced sustainability.

139. Further to the larger theme of ownership, the evaluation team was surprised to hear reports from several stakeholders – both adviser and beneficiary side – of continuing disagreements about daily payments and salary top-ups. For these issues to remain of

[2] Ownership is consistently described as central to effectiveness and sustainability in development cooperation. See for example: The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; Nicola Smithers for the World Bank; and OECD, 2019. For capacity development, it is more so, as stated in the FAO Learning Module on Capacity Development: "For capacity development support to contribute to sustainable results, it cannot bypass the issue of national/local ownership." (p. 63). For projects aiming to influence policy processes, Jones (2011, p. 5) provides an indication of how ownership is a process in itself: "It is also desirable for projects and programmes to gradually reduce their control over changes as the causal chain progresses, as change needs to be owned locally, rather than externally, to be sustainable, especially if these are questions of politics and policy."

concern at the end of a project (and a 15-year history of cooperation on a relatively continuous programme) suggests that the programme did not integrate operating procedures and practices among all partners, further hindering effective localization of the efforts.

140. It is understandable that FAO would seek to maintain the highest standards in transparency, accountability, and to use funds for proper and approved purposes. It would be expected that the collaboration would have cultivated shared views on these concepts and agreed on appropriate mechanisms early in the programme. Organizational capacity development support would ideally help ensure transparency and accountability within partner organizations which would enable further transfer of responsibility and leadership.

Lesson 7. Local ownership promoted through work modalities and decision-making arrangements can contribute to ensuring sustainable capacity development and an enhanced enabling environment. Ownership is better served if programmes can strengthen and employ localized accountability and transparency systems rather than imposing outside control.

141. Examples were provided by stakeholders suggesting small steps that could have elevated local ownership: the project governance mechanisms could have been used to encourage improvement of internal government procedures they were concerned with; when local partners expressed interest for more control over resources use, this could have been an entry into discussing accountability systems; sub-grants could have been used to give autonomy and budget control to local partners. It takes a concerted and joint effort among stakeholders to move towards greater local ownership, a process depicted in the Vicious and Virtuous Cycles of Empowerment (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003, p. 42).

5.4 Implementation challenge 3: Vested Interests

142. Any programme necessarily situates itself within an administrative and political context and how leaders navigate this context helps shape programme effectiveness. MUCH was designed to use the FPMU as an entry point to the larger set of FSN stakeholders. After ten years of the NFPCSP, the FPMU had understandably come to see the programme as a central part of its identity, a vehicle for accessing resources (technical and financial) and a tool for implementing priorities. MUCH was designed to depart from this heavy emphasis on the FPMU while still situating itself within the unit – a balancing act. Various stakeholders reported to the evaluation team that with the turnover of many individuals – within Government, FAO and even donors – the institutional memory and willingness to make this significant shift lost momentum. FPMU officers made a good case that with new people in place, they needed additional capacity development support and new leadership argued the new team needed resources to sustain gains made under the NFPCSP: they understandably resisted thinning out project resources to focus on other ministries.

143. The European Union reported a parallel challenge: gaining agreement among government leaders to shift substantial funding through international NGOs, as part of an inclusive nutrition programme (two of three large projects within the nutrition programme were designed to be managed by international NGOs). It is common for institutions accustomed to substantial financial and technical support to resist the transfer of that support to other actors, even in the service of the same objectives.

144. MUCH leadership worked hard to gain agreement among all partners to slowly shift some resources to additional partners. The BNNC was one of those partners, and this presented

an unexpected challenge in stakeholder perceptions of propriety, status and authority: MUCH was viewed as linked closely with the Ministry of Food; the BNNC is within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare which has authority for overall coordination of nutrition. Statements from key stakeholders and observers strongly suggested differing perceptions of the most appropriate institutional arrangements. While all stakeholders appreciate the benefits of collaboration and highly value MUCH and FAO support, care needs to be taken to respect institutional mandates and policies, differing technical capacities, and receptivity to working relationships. Crossing institutional boundaries for donors, development agencies and ministries, remains both essential and challenging.

145. The research component of MUCH faced similar challenges navigating the expectations and interests of individuals and offices. The research grants were intended to be issued to research partners, but there was reportedly interest for use with the Ministry. The MUCH leadership instituted a rigorous process to ensure objectivity and neutrality in grant selection, but the difference of opinion and interests reportedly led to delay of the research programme approval for more than six months. This added to an already slow start ultimately pushing the research projects into the pandemic era and substantially more complication.

146. Further to these issues, as discussed in the section above on ownership, the evaluation team received reports of differing expectations on the use of salary top-ups, daily payments, and other use of resources. These issues are perennial in a development assistance context, not specific to this one project, and needed to be managed.

147. Adding all three of these issues together, we get a picture of vested interests exerting understandable but ultimately inharmonious influence over the MUCH programme. While the interests are understandable, they added to delays and inefficiencies of the programme as a whole. The MUCH leadership (here we speak of all parties) does not appear to have addressed the challenge early and effectively – conflict was avoided but cohesiveness and harmonization was not reportedly achieved.

Lesson 8. Confounding administrative challenges, differing expectations, differing modalities (Government of Bangladesh, donors and FAO), and vested interests can undermine pursuit of strategic goals unless addressed fairly and thoroughly at a high level and early in a collaboration.

148. Leadership on all sides needs to make a commitment to this effort and to reach consensus. This may involve formal actions and decisions by a steering committee or other oversight body, informal discussion and agreement by project leaders (donors, the Chief Technical Adviser, the lead national counterparts), or a mix of both. However, such challenges are almost universally present and effective programmes need a strategy for dealing with them early that respects imperatives and cultures on all sides.

5.5 Implementation challenge 4. FAO administrative complexity and lack of strategic leadership

149. In section 3.6 on efficiency, the team outlined several points on which project administration was slow or inefficient for various reasons. Now, focus on one of those will be presented: the challenge FAO had in mobilizing appropriate and high quality technical expertise. FAO's key added value was expected to be expert advice and support to capacity development and policy development. It is clear that this is realized as mobilizing experts.

From all sides – the donor, the Government and FAO itself – the evaluation team heard reports and details about how FAO was slow or even failed in mobilizing the full technical advisory team.

150. When FAO did mobilize good people – and comments from stakeholders universally agreed that the *quality of technical advisers was high and the working relationships were* productive – FAO administration relied heavily on consultancy contracts rather than term staff contracts.[3] A comment from one FAO stakeholder illustrates the impact: "it is no wonder the technical accomplishments are good but the long-term capacity impact is less, because we were using consultant contracts that do not allow the same longer relationships and mentorship." The consultants were rushed to complete technical tasks such as developing research terms of reference, drafting sections of policy, or designing tools, and were not able to take the time to engage in the lengthier process of supporting FPMU or other government officers to accomplish the same. This undermined capacity development, especially in more complex aspects such as instituting formal mechanisms for consultation and collaboration, and developing a functioning research-policy nexus mechanism.

151. The rush was a function of more than the form of contract: delays at the beginning of the project condensed the time period available for many tasks, from developing the CIP2 to organizing the research projects. The delays, in turn, are attributable to many issues, but key among those identified by stakeholders was the slow recruitment process for positions from the Chief Technical Adviser to technical officers. Understandably, the pandemic undermined mobilization of quality experts, but this was after the team ought to have been fully formed and all partners reported that FAO set up effective communications measures to adapt to this challenge as well as can be expected.

152. The CIP2 was approved in late 2017, but was intended to cover the period from 2016 to 2020. The capacity needs assessment results were not available till 2019 but capacity development efforts started in 2017. The research projects were not approved until late 2019 and started in early 2020 just before the pandemic hit. These are three specific examples of actions that ought to have taken place much earlier and probably would have if the technical assistance team had been in place earlier, as intended.

153. We see two big impacts from the slow mobilization of technical assistance as consultants: delayed outputs and overly technical capacity development support, lacking a focus on leadership and institutionalization of good practice. For FAO, this is a critical lesson to learn. Developing countries need strategic support for food-based solutions to nutrition and food security challenges and FAO is the best placed United Nations agency to do this.

Lesson 9. FAO's added value and competitive advantage depends entirely on its ability to mobilize good people quickly and efficiently to provide technical assistance where and when needed.

[3] The key difference between a consulting contract and a term contract, from a programming perspective, is that the consultant will only be available for 11 months of the year and there is less certainty of the person serving the entire project period, while a staff appointment is full-time (though the person also has vacation usually for a similar amount of time) and more dependably lasts out the length of a project. From an administrative standpoint, the consultant is easier to get on-board and less expensive, while a project staff person takes longer to get on-board and requires more budget. For various reasons that go beyond this evaluation, the consulting contract has become a common tool for FAO when mobilizing expertise.

154. Reportedly, the agency is revising its HR system to address this issue. The evaluation team believes many countries stand to benefit from a more efficient FAO administrative system for mobilizing technical assistance.

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Appendix 1. Stakeholders consulted

Last name	First name	Institution/agency	Role
Afsana	Kaiser	BRAC University	Professor and Principal Investigator
Ahmed	Akhter U	IFPRI	Country Representative
Ahmed	Razu	BIRTAN	Senior Instructor, BIRTAN
Akash	Sharif Ishtiak	Bangladesh Agricultural University	Student/Participant of Nutrition Olympiad/Nutrition Challenge Bade/Nutrition Club
Akhter	Md. Selim	FPMU, GoB	Research Director
Alam	Sainar	DoFood, GoB	Deputy Director
Arefin	Badrul	FPMU, GoB	Former Director General, FPMU Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs
Azad	Mr. Abul Kalam	ICCO Cooperation	Head of Programmes-South Asia, BD Office
Banna	Mostafa Faruq Al	FPMU, GoB	Associate Research Director
Begum	Nurun Naher	MoWCA, GoB	Senior Assistant Chief (PRL)
Bhattacharjee	Lalita	FAO	Senior Nutrition Adviser
Bhowmik	Hillul	FPMU, GoB	Research Officer
Bhuiyan	Meher Nigar	Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh	Programme Manager – Food & Nutrition Security
Bhuiyan	Nazmul	USAID	POC MUCH
Bhuiyan	Shahidur Rashid	USAID	Former USAID Adviser (Focal point for MUCH)
Borna	Isratuz Jahan	Bangladesh Agricultural University	Student/Participant of Nutrition Olympiad/Nutrition Challenge Badge/ Nutrition Club
Brocca	Sumiter	FAORAP	Former LTO
Chakma	Priyo Kanti	MoFL, GoB	Upazila Fisheries Officer
Cortijo	Marie Jo A.	FAO	International Consultant
Dewan	Happy	District Technical Coordinator	GAIN/LEAN
Dey	Nepal	BRAC University	Professor and Principal Investigator
Eva	Monira Mustari	Ministry of Education, GoB	District Secondary Education Officer
Farid	Md. Naser	FAO	Governance Policy Adviser
Faruki	Md. Shahiduzzaman	FPMU, GoB	Director general
Ferdous	Farazi Binti	FAO	Representative of MUCH-FAO Focal Person
Fiorillo	Ciro	FAOPAL	Country Head, Jerusalem
Haque	Sadika	Bangladesh Agricultural University	Professor and Principal Investigator
Hasan	Md. Kamrul	Bangladesh Agricultural University	Professor and Principal Investigator
Hasan	Mohammad Monirul	FAO	Markets and Trade Policy Adviser
Hashem	Abul	FPMU, GoB	Associate Research Director
Hussain	Md. Iqbal	MoWCA, GoB	Joint Secretary
Imam	Akhter	BNNC, GoB	Deputy Director
Islam	AKM Saiful	Bangladesh Agricultural University	Professor and Principal Investigator
Islam	Hajiqul	FPMU, GoB	Research Director
Islam	Md. Mahinur	FPMU, GoB	Associate Research Director
Islam	Md. Toriqul	MoFL, GoB	Upazila Livestock Officer
Islam	Monirul	BARC, MoA	Member-Director, BARC
Islam	Rofiqul	Bangladesh Agricultural University	Professor and Principal Investigator
Jahan	Alima Nusrat	FPMU, GoB	Associate Research Director

Last name	First name	Institution/agency	Role
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Kalam	Kazi Abul	BIRTAN, GoB	Director (Joint Secretary)
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Karim	Rezaul	WFP	Head of Programmes
Kazal	Md. Mizanul Haque	FAO	Poverty and Social Protection Adviser
Khan	Md. Masud Alam	World Vision BD	Team Leader, Bangladesh Initiative to Enhance Nutrition Security and Governance (BIENGS) Project
Khan	Reza Ahmed	DAM, Ministry of Agriculture, GoB	Senior Agricultural Marketing Officer
Khan	Sainar Alam	DoFood, GoB	Deputy Director
Khanum	Mosammat Nazmanara	Ministry of Food, GoB	Secretary
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Khondaker	Nur Ahmed	FAO	Focal Person, MUCH & Assistant FAO Representative (Programme)
Khondker	Rudaba	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)	Country Director
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Lima	Israt Jahan	Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University	Student/Participant of Nutrition Olympiad/Nutrition Challenge Badge/ Nutrition Club
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Appendix 2. Documents consulted

Name of document	Type of document
Heavy metal contamination – a threat to food safety	Factsheet
"MUCH", 2017 Results Partnerships Impact 2018, FAO, pages 60-61	Policy Support Document
2020-12-14 MUCH in Brief	MUCH in Brief
A Rapid Survey of Youth on Covid-19 Related Nutrition Awareness, Behaviour and Food Security in Bangladesh Report (Pending Publication)	Technical report
A Report on an institutional and Staff Capacity Needs Assessment for Food and Nutrition Security in Bangladesh within the Framework of the MUCH programme	Capacity/ Needs Assessment Report
Annual Report provided to USAID (AOR)	M&E report
Bangladesh: Second Country Investment Plan: Nutrition-Sensitive Food Systems (2016-2020)	Policy document
Creating a Stronger Enabling Environment to Combat Undernutrition in Bangladesh: The MUCH programme	Factsheet
Diversified and Sustainable Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock for Healthy Diets. Background paper for the Bangladesh Second Country Investment Plan 2016–20 Nutrition-sensitive Food Systems. 2017.	Policy document
EU Project Document	Project document
Exhibition on Pulse based recipes in collaboration with SAARC/ BARC/ FAO/ MUCH	BCC tools and educational materials
Food and Nutrition during emergencies and conflict situation (available both in English and Bangla)	BCC tools and educational materials
Food Safety, Quality Improvement, and Reduction of Food Losses and Food Waste in Bangladesh. Background paper for the Bangladesh Second Country Investment Plan 2016–20 Nutrition-sensitive Food Systems. 2017.	Policy document
Gender Strategy	Policy support document
Governance for food and nutrition security: a focus on promoting a nutrition-sensitive food system. Background paper for the Bangladesh Second Country Investment Plan 2016–20 Nutrition-sensitive Food Systems. 2017.	Policy document
Healthy Food Plate: An Effective Tool for Nutrition Counselling in Bangladesh (http://fpmu.gov.bd/agridrupal/healthy-food-plate-effective-tool-nutrition-counselling-bangladesh)	BCC tools and educational materials
Healthy mug	BCC tools and educational materials
How to store eggs	Factsheet
Implications of diversified agriculture production on the economic and nutritional status of farming households in selected areas of Bangladesh	
Increased dietary diversity, consumption and utilisation. Background paper for the Bangladesh Second Country Investment Plan 2016–20 Nutrition-sensitive Food Systems. 2017.	Policy document
Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) for Chronic Food Insecurity Report (Pending Publication)	Technical report
January 2018: Dietary Diversity Methodologies	BCC tools and educational materials
Linkages between Women`s Empowerment, Children`s Diet and Nutrition under Rapid Urbanisation in Bangladesh	
M&E Plan	
Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge: Strengthening the Enabling Environment for Eradicating Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in Bangladesh	Presentation of Naoki (CTA of MUCH programme)
Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge: Strengthening the Enabling Environment for Food Security and Nutrition	Project document – European Union
Midterm evaluation (by the European Union) report	M&E
Monitoring Report 2019 of the Second Country Investment Plan 2016–20 Nutrition-sensitive Food Systems. 2019.	Monitoring report

Name of document	Type of document
MUCH programme fact sheets	Factsheet
MUCH: Strengthening the enabling environment for food security and nutrition 2014-2019	Umbrella programme document
National Dietary Guidelines (Bengali version). 2015.	Training manuals/ guidelines
National Food and Nutrition Security Policy of Bangladesh 2020 (NFNSP). 2020.	Policy document
National Food Policy Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan Monitoring Report 2015 (MR 2015). 2016.	Monitoring report
National Food Policy Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan Monitoring Report 2016 (MR 2016). 2017.	Monitoring report
National Food Policy Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan Monitoring Report 2017 (MR 2017) (Bengali version). 2018.	Monitoring report
National Food Policy Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan Monitoring Report 2016 (MR 2017). 2018.	Monitoring report
National Food Policy Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan Monitoring Report 2016 (MR 2018). 2019	Monitoring report
National Food Policy Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan Monitoring Report 2016 (MR 2019). 2020	Monitoring report
November -December 2018 International training on Nutrition-sensitive food systems in Thailand	BCC tools and educational materials
Nutrient density and affordable of habitual and desirable diets in Bangladesh by life cycle stage, region, and vulnerable groups	Document
Nutrition Challenge Badge (NCB) e-Learning Platform. 2020 (available in Dec 2020) Pending software development	Technical Report
Nutrition Challenge Badge Activity Book (Bangla)	BCC tools and educational materials
Nutrition Challenge Badge Manual (English and Bangla)	BCC tools and educational materials
Organizational Capacity Assessment Report. 2019.	Capacity/ Needs Assessment Report
Policy Options to Integrate Nutrition-Sensitive Approaches into the Social Protection System in Bangladesh	Policy brief
Postharvest transformation, value addition and food supply in Bangladesh. Background paper for the Bangladesh Second Country Investment Plan 2016–20 Nutrition-sensitive Food Systems. 2017.	Policy document
Proceedings of the Seminar on Methodologies for Measuring Poverty and Food Insecurity, 2015	Document
Proceedings of the Technical Consultation on the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) Follow-up Actions and the Technical Symposium on Nutrition-Sensitive Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. 2018.	Report of proceedings
Proceedings of the Technical Symposium on Nutrition-sensitive Agriculture. 2016.	Report of proceedings
Proceedings of the Technical Symposium on Nutrition-sensitive Sensitive Social Protection. 2017.	Report of proceedings
Proceedings of the Technical Symposium on Nutrition-sensitive Urban Food Systems, 2020 (Pending Publication)	Technical report
MUCH Programme Highlights Presentation	PowerPoint Presentation
MUCH Programme Progress Report 2017	Progress report
MUCH Programme Progress Report 2018	Progress report
MUCH Programme Progress Report 2019	Progress report
Promoting Minimum Dietary Diversity-Women (MDD-W): Bangladesh MDD-W MUCH Healthy Mug (English and Bangla)	Factsheet
Pulse Based Recipes for Better Diets and Nutrition	Recipes
Report of the Nutrition Olympiad 2019	Policy support document

Name of document	Type of document
Revised draft dietary guidelines – ongoing with two new volumes: age-specific and therapeutic guidelines. 2020.	Training manuals/ guidelines
Revised draft dietary guidelines – ongoing with two new volumes: age-specific and therapeutic guidelines. 2020.	Training manuals/ guidelines
Roadmap to the 2019 Monitoring Report of the Second Country Investment Plan on Nutrition-Sensitive Food Systems (CIP2, 2016-2020). 2018	Training manuals/ guidelines
Roadmap to the 2020 Monitoring Report of the Second Country Investment Plan on Nutrition-Sensitive Food Systems (CIP2, 2016-2020). 2019	Training manuals/ guidelines
Role of fish in nutrition	Factsheet
Role of horticulture in nutrition	Factsheet
Role of small livestock and backyard poultry in nutrition	Factsheet
Role of small livestock and backyard poultry in nutrition	Factsheet
Safe cooking of poultry	Factsheet
Safe storage of food and water	Factsheet
Safer street foods	Factsheet
Second Country Investment Plan: Cost–Benefit Analysis of Nutrition-sensitive Interventions. 2018.	Policy document
Second National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN2). 2018.	Policy document
Specialised Training Course on Ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition as indicators of SDG 2 for use in methodologies and application in food security and nutrition (FSN) policies, 7-9 March 2018	
Steering committee reports	Document
Survey on consumer awareness of nutrition, food safety and hygiene	Document
Terminal Report Prepared for the Government of Bangladesh by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Rome 2020)	Terminal report
Terminal Report USA	Terminal report
Terms of Reference of the research to be funded under the Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH). 2018.	Terms of reference
Total diet study of Bangladesh	Document
Training needs and institutional capacity development needs assessment. 2019	Capacity/ Needs Assessment Report
Training needs and institutional capacity development needs assessment. 2019. or "A report on an institutional and staff capacity needs assessment for Food and Nutrition Security in Bangladesh within the Framework of the MUCH programme"	Capacity/ Needs Assessment Report
USAID Funding Agreement (2015)	USAID funding contract
USAID Grant Contract	Grant contract
USAID PRODOC	Project document
USAID Progress Report 2015	Progress report
USAID Progress Report 2016	Progress report
USAID Progress Report 2017	Progress report
USAID-project highlights	Project highlights

Appendix 3. Evaluation team

The evaluation team included the following persons:

i. Team leader: Michael J. Jones, based in the United States of America. Mr Jones has over 20 years of experience designing, running and evaluating FSN projects. He has worked with FAO on country level and international food security policy advisory programmes. He was responsible for leading the team of advisers, designing the evaluation approach and tools, organizing the data collection, and drafting all presentations and reports, with contributions from the team.

ii. Evaluation expert: Dr Shaheen Akter, based in the the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Dr Akter has worked with the Overseas Development Institute in London for evaluation of programmes related to agribusiness, food security, social protection and nutrition issues. Dr Akter played an integral part in developing the evaluation approach and carrying out the data collection. Her connections to key leaders within the FSN stakeholders assisted with important access for the team. She contributed strongly to the presentations and reports.

iii. Evaluation expert: Dr Mohammad Jahangir Alam, based in Bangladesh. Dr Alam was part of the team from evaluation launch to completion. He worked extensively to arrange meetings and ensure access to all stakeholders consulted. He also contributed strongly to all presentations and report.

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