



Mobile Media Campaign Reaches Remote Villages to Promote Nutrition

Good nutrition in the womb and during the first two years of life is essential to children's healthy growth and development. In Bangladesh, many pregnant women and children are undernourished in those critical first 1,000 days from conception to a child's second birthday.

Commercials that aired on national television and radio in Bangladesh helped increase breastfeeding and complementary feeding—proven measures for improving child survival, growth, and development. But only 60 percent of the country's population has access to electricity, and less than one-third of households in rural areas are connected to the grid.

In February of 2014, the SHIKHA project launched a mobile media campaign to reach “media-dark” communities with important information about nutrition and hygiene. This award-winning campaign builds on the efforts of the project's thousands of community-based workers, who promote healthier maternal diets and infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices in 26 subdistricts of southern Bangladesh.

Community Outreach

Named for the Bangla term “*shisukekhawano*,” which means infant and young child feeding, the SHIKHA project works to improve nutrition among pregnant women and children up to 2 years of age. Through BRAC, an international development organization based in Bangladesh, the project has trained 5,413 community volunteers (*shasthya shebikas*), 374 community health workers (*shasthya kormis*), and 708 nutrition workers (*pushti kormis*).

ALIVE & THRIVE: COMMUNICATION WITH IMPACT

The SHIKHA project's mobile media campaign presents video of seven TV commercials about infant and child nutrition in villages where most people have no access to television. Another project implemented by FHI 360 in Bangladesh, Alive & Thrive, developed the TV commercials for a national mass media campaign that was coordinated with social mobilization and counseling of 1.7 million mothers.

Based on sophisticated market research, the commercials address specific barriers to breastfeeding, complementary feeding, and handwashing. One of the commercials advises parents to “keep soap and water nearby” for handwashing to prevent disease. Others explain the proper amount of food to give children at various ages, counter the misperception that breastmilk alone is not enough nourishment for a child in the first six months, and illustrate how to feed a child with a poor appetite.

An evaluation of Alive & Thrive found substantial improvements in practices such as early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding, and timely introduction of complementary feeding over four years (2010–14). Increases in recommended practices were reported in areas of the country exposed only to the mass media campaign but were 29 to 51 percentage points higher in the project areas that received comprehensive interventions.

The nutrition workers register every pregnancy in the communities they serve. They work with the community volunteers to ensure that each woman receives nutrition counseling, coaching, demonstrations, and referrals during 17 specifically timed home visits over the course of her pregnancy and the first two years of her child's life. These field-level workers help families adapt household foods for child feeding, building mothers' confidence and skills to prevent and overcome common feeding difficulties, and ensure that a conveniently located water container and soap are available so mothers can wash their hands before feeding their children.

SHIKHA community health workers also conduct home visits, providing medical care and nutrition counseling to pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, and convene groups of pregnant women, mothers, mothers-in-law, and adolescent girls to discuss health, nutrition, and hygiene. Project staff members build support for healthier feeding practices among families and communities by providing orientation sessions to fathers, doctors, religious leaders, and other community members.

Mobile Media Campaign

More than half the villages served by the SHIKHA project have no or poor electricity or limited access to television. In 2014, the project partnered with Asiatic Marketing & Communication, Ltd., to take the Alive & Thrive mass media campaign to people in those communities.

The project identified 1,557 "media-dark" villages for the campaign, later expanding to a total of 2,500 villages. In each village, an advance team plans the event with SHIKHA community workers, identifying a venue and a list of pregnant women, parents of young children, and influential community members to invite.

Mobile teams consisting of a female communicator and a male promoter travel to the villages by van or boat, carrying supplies that include a large TV screen and a generator. Often held outdoors, the team's mobile media shows are lively and interactive. Each event features viewing and discussion of the seven TV commercials, question-and-answer sessions, demonstrations of handwashing



and IYCF practices, and quiz shows. Participants in the quiz shows receive prizes such as bars of soap and bowls for handwashing.

Over two years, the mobile teams plan to conduct 7,500 shows. By August 2015, 824,681 people had participated in 3,257 shows. That month, the campaign won a prestigious Grand Prix award from Commward, which was established by the Bangladesh Brand Forum to recognize creativity in the communication industry.

An Integrated Campaign

To help families improve their diets, the SHIKHA project invited fellow partners in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Feed the Future initiative to add campaign messages and demonstrations on aquaculture, gardening, and poultry rearing. SHIKHA staff met with their counterparts from Aquaculture for Income and Nutrition (AIN); Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING); and the International Potato Center (CIP) to determine additional topics to include in the campaign and plan training in those topics for the mobile teams.

Mobile team members began delivering the integrated campaign in October 2014. Nutrition is still at center stage, but now the teams also teach participants to grow homestead gardens, improve the yields of tilapia raised in household ponds, and use low-cost, hands-free "tippy-tap devices" to wash their hands.

An unanticipated benefit of the integration has been an increase in men's engagement in the shows. The collaboration has proved mutually beneficial, expanding the audience for the agriculture projects' messages and helping SHIKHA reach fathers and other men who play an important role in decisions about maternal and child nutrition.

INTEGRATED AGRICULTURE-NUTRITION CAMPAIGN TOPICS

SHIKHA

- Diet during pregnancy
- Early initiation of breastfeeding
- Exclusive breastfeeding
- Complementary feeding
- Handwashing

AIN

- Tilapia farming
- Use of PCR-tested seed for shrimp cultivation

SPRING

- Hajol (a device for better egg production)
- Tippy-tap (a device for handwashing promotion)

CIP-Horticulture

- Cultivation and consumption of orange-fleshed sweet potato
- Homestead gardening of vegetables