Funded by the European Union, the Leadership to Ensure Adequate Nutrition (LEAN) project aims to break the perpetual cycle of undernutrition in 18 Upazilas in the three Districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The project will work to improve maternal and child nutrition for 282,000 pregnant and lactating women, children under 5 and adolescent girls from 210,000 households by providing holistic, nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific livelihoods models to diversify diets and income for the most vulnerable. Maternal and child undernutrition has negative impacts on cognitive development, learning outcomes, health, productivity and national economic growth and, therefore, requires a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach. LEAN will improve and strengthen local nutrition governance through facilitating District and Upazila multi-stakeholder platforms (MSP), linked to the Government of Bangladesh’s Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC) and the Bangladesh National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN2).

LEAN will increase nutrition sensitive awareness and behaviour change at the community level through community campaigns, adolescent clubs, radio messaging and community spaces, including a network of 160 Women Business Centres. The project will work with local government and indigenous structures including Circle Chief, Headman, Karbari, schools and community clinics to raise awareness around nutrition practices. Building on the huge potential in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to grow high value produce, the project will train 1,080 Local Service Providers. LEAN will increase smallholder farmers’ access to suppliers, buyers and public service agencies through these LSPs and Public Private Partnerships will be established for regular interactions between farmers, government and the private sector.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE is to contribute to improved maternal and child nutrition in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Create an enabling environment for improved and sustained pro-poor nutrition security service delivery and awareness

2. Improve smallholder farmer and micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) friendly value chains through scalable innovations to increase availability and consumption of diversified, safe and nutritious food
Impressive progress in food production has been achieved over recent years in Bangladesh, and the proportion of moderate or severe stunting in under 5’s has reduced from 55% in 1997 to 41% in 2011, and 36% in 2014 (NIPORT 2015 & BDHS 2014). Despite this significant achievement, undernutrition remains high. Levels of stunting are particularly high in the Chittagong Hill Tracts - Bandarban (40.6%), Rangamati (51.4%) and Khagrachari (52.9%), respectively. The levels of underweight and wasting are also severe and overall poverty rates are high. Breastfeeding is poor, particularly in Bandarban where only 64% of mothers exclusively breastfeed. A lack of diet diversification has an impact on the health status of women and children, particularly for pregnant and lactating women. 48.1% live below the lower poverty line in Bandarban. National health services and nutrition policies fail to adequately take into consideration the unique context of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and inadequate infrastructure, insufficient clean water supply, language barriers, lack of community trust and remoteness are all barriers which restrict access to nutrition and health services in the region.
Expected Results

Result 1
Improved capacity, commitment and accountability of national, regional and local institutions to ensure better integration of nutrition services

Result 2
Enhanced awareness, demand and consumption of nutritious food intake of direct nutrition inputs (DNIs) and improved WASH practices

Result 3
Strengthened vertical and horizontal alliances for nutrition sensitive, transparent and climate smart value chains

Project Objective
With the overall objective of contributing to improved maternal and child nutrition in the CHT, the project aims to:

- Reduce the prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years old by 4%
- Reduce low BMI prevalence among ever-married women (aged 19-49 years) by 3%
- Reduce undernourishment in adolescent girls by 5% in the project area

Approaches
In order to achieve this, the project will apply a life-cycle approach that will target children, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls to shift attitudes and inform sustainable behaviour change, whilst creating an enabling environment for improved nutrition governance - both horizontally from District to national level and vertically at the Upazila level - strengthening food and market systems across the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

To request further information, please contact Subhagya Mangal Chakma, LEAN Project Director:
Address United Purpose, Floor 3, House 26, Road 23, Block K, Banani, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1213
Email subhagya.chakma@united-purpose.org
Phone Mobile: +8801811237642, Office:+88029855296, +88028835800