Tackling stunting in Bangladesh: the WASH - Nutrition Nexus

Photo: UNICEF
Reduction in open defecation explains a reduction in stunting, but does not stop stunting entirely.

The reduction in open defecation only has a limited effect on stunting reduction. Hygiene could explain the gap.

Stunting (or chronic child malnutrition) can result in:
- increased mortality risks
- impaired cognitive function
- low physical capacity
- low human productivity, efficiency, economic activity

1990-2013 MICS Data
When comparing interventions, combining WASH, nutrition and care has the biggest impact on growth.

Newman, J (2013) How Stunting is related to Adequate Food, Environmental Health and Care: Evidence from India, Bangladesh, and Peru, World Bank
The theory is that ingestion of fecal matter affects absorption of nutrients - environmental enteropathy.
How to improve the effectiveness of the fight of Stunting

A

EVIDENCE - SHOWCASES

Max Foundation:

Unicef:

Other organisations’ programs:

B

IDEAS FOR SCALE UP

Collaboration programs

Stakeholder engagement

Knowledge and evidence

Policy & politics

Resources, capacity & finances

Other

Examples of programs contributing to the effectiveness

World Water Week Conference, Stockholm, 2017
The WASH-Nutrition Nexus
Our mission is to fight child mortality by providing a healthy start in life for as many children as possible in the most effective and sustainable way.
Our Approach: Stunting Free Village

Influenced by the success of CLTS
Concept developed based on published research on stunting
Considers local determinants of stunting and first 1000 days

The concept

Infection prevention + Effective Nutrition + Safe motherhood

Equitable WASH and Health governance

Triggering > Action > Evaluation

Growth monitoring chart - green, yellow and red zones for measuring stunting

While complete eradication of stunting may not be possible, that’s our aim
We trigger change by focusing on parents’ most precious resource: their children.

Tools we use include

- courtyard sessions by health promotion agents trained by local partners

- monitoring children’s growth monthly, and Parents plot data on a community growth chart

- peer learning to help identify and avoid risky behaviours that contribute to stunting

*Mothers and children, with a scale for measuring weight*
Notable behaviour change and improved health status of children have inspired us to mainstream this approach*

Parents are the best researchers on how to reduce stunting – identifying 34 risky behaviours

There seems to be a causal link between improved growth of <2 children and WASH behaviour change by parents

Children whose parents who practiced at least 60% of 34 behaviours showed improved growth

The most important factor for change is the motivational level of the parents.

*Based on our findings from initial action research in four villages (653 HHs / 122 children <2)