



# THE LEARNING AND PRACTICES AMONG THE ADOLESCENTS ON HEALTH, HYGIENE & NUTRITION IN THE JANO INTERVENTION AREAS OF BANGLADESH

One-fifth of the total population of Bangladesh, approximately 36 million, are adolescents. This group often lacks knowledge and has limited access to healthcare services. Due to a variety of factors, girls have insufficient dietary diversity, meaning that they do not eat a healthy diet, resulting in one-fifth of the total being at risk for malnutrition. In addition, 45% of adolescent girls practice unhealthy menstrual hygiene management which makes them even more vulnerable. Studies show that to grow and develop healthfully and with good knowledge and optimal practices, adolescents need to receive age-appropriate comprehensive education on food and nutrition, personal and menstrual hygiene and water and sanitation sexual and reproductive health (SRH), how and when to seek healthcare providers, mental health and protection.

To improve the situation Joint Action for Nutrition Outcome (JANO) has been working to “Contribute to ending malnutrition of children under five years of age, together with addressing the nutritional needs of Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW) and adolescent girls”. The project has been working in two districts in the Northern part of Bangladesh: Rangpur and Nilphamari; covering seven Upazilas and 64 unions. These areas were chosen because they were one of the two most vulnerable districts, with a stunting rate of 42.1%. This five-year project has been implemented in the field with funding support from the European Union (EU) and co-funded by Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). The consortium is led by CARE International, Plan International, and the Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO).

## Key Information

### Working Areas

**Rangpur**  
Taraganj, Kaunia, Gangachara

**Nilphamari**  
Nilphamari Sadar, Domar, Jaldhaka, Kishoreganj

### Total participants

**275415**  
Pregnant & Lactating Women and Married Adolescents

**421425** **Adolescent boys** | **Adolescent girls**

Target School / Madrasa

**331**

Adolescent Club in Union Health & Family Welfare Center (UH&FWC)

**64**

Climate-smart vegetable replicated garden at household

**3049**

Theater for Development (TfD) Group

**65**

Climate-smart vegetable garden at schools

**331**

Adolescent Corner at schools

**331**

# LEARNING AND PRACTICES AMONG THE ADOLESCENTS ON HEALTH, HYGIENE & NUTRITION IN THE JANO INTERVENTION AREAS

The project has worked at multiple levels of government, specifically with Nutrition Committees at the district, sub-district, and union levels, to improve their capacity to develop nutritional plans, implement and budget for these plans, and provide effective oversight in their implementation. JANO project activities have promoted nutrition, health, and hygiene learning, as well as improved knowledge and behaviours of menstruation hygiene among adolescent girls in both project implementation areas. Through its interventions such as **Gender Equity Movement at School (GEMS) sessions, adolescent corners at school, adolescent club, Theatre for Development (TFD), and others**, JANO has been promoting nutrition, health, and hygiene learning as well as improved knowledge and behaviours of menstruation hygiene among adolescents in project areas. JANO tries to strengthen the government system and supports the Health and Family Welfare Department in establishing the **adolescent club** at the Family Welfare Centre (FWC). JANO aims to create secured access to information and strengthen services and expects that women and adolescent girls in communities will be empowered to demand and utilise both nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific services.

According to the Mid-Term Review report, the proportion of students who apply key learning points about nutrition, health, and hygiene at home has increased from 0.15% to 7.7%. But there is still a long way to go. Therefore, action research is necessary to determine the extent to which adolescents have gained knowledge on key health, hygiene, and nutrition issues, as well as the extent to which that knowledge could or has changed behaviours and practices of the school-going adolescents.

According to an assessment of the knowledge and practices among the adolescents on health, hygiene & nutrition in the JANO intervention areas of Bangladesh it was found that the JANO project activities increased knowledge on nutrition during their adolescent years, especially for girls. They are now reported to be aware of the negative impact of the malnutrition cycle, which can have long-term effects on an individual's life. The project activities also increased adolescent knowledge and awareness level of pubertal changes, and girls are now more aware than boys. Girls are becoming more aware of menstruation, and boys are more aware of wet dreams, but there are still some misconceptions. Three-fourths of the girls are now using sanitary pads, but there is a knowledge gap regarding the frequency of changing pads. Adolescents are aware of GBV and its various forms, as well as the consequences of child marriage. The schools have improved toilet access, but soap is not available in some cases and there are some barriers in terms of student-toilet ratio and toilet cleanliness. Most of the adolescents are now eating maintaining the dietary diversity as learned from JANO intervention, as JANO activities are their primary source of information.

## Adolescent Interventions and Key Achievements

### Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS)

Aims to promote gender equality in adolescent settings by encouraging equal connections between girls and boys through the education system. Specially support to questioning the social norms that define men's and women's roles, challenging the use of violence, and giving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) knowledge to adolescents.

#### Key Achievements

- **297** secondary schools & madrasa implementing GEMS curriculum
- **39000** students received GEMS sessions
- **34** primary schools implementing GEMS in alternative modality

### Climate-Smart Vegetable Garden at Schools

Aims to establish dietary diversity among student, JANO project started contributing to climate-smart vegetable gardens. This activity also has a very wide vision of engaging adolescent with farming and introducing natural and sustainable technology in agriculture.

#### Key Achievements

- **331** Schools have climate-smart vegetable gardens
- **3049** gardens have been replicated at the household level

## Adolescent corner in schools

Adolescent Corner is a separate room established in 331 schools and Madrasahs. The Corner has different kinds of IEC, SBCC, and Game materials. Students visit the Corner as per their routine. From these Corners, they learned additional nutrition-related messages, Body Mass Index (BMI), Gender, and SRHR-related messages.

### Key Achievements

- **331** adolescent corners established and regularly being used by students from 331 educational institutions
- Deputy Commissioner (DC) Nilphamari supported to develop **62** new well-structured rooms in 62 schools to maintain adolescent corners including a menstrual hygiene corner

## Adolescent Club in Union Health and Family Welfare Center

Adolescent Clubs, especially for out-of-school adolescents, is a unique initiative in the JANO project area to involve adolescents in a safe learning space to gain knowledge on basic concepts of gender, nutrition, and different issues related to adolescent health.

### Key Achievements

- **64** clubs (corners) functioned in Union Health & Welfare Center
- **128** trained peer educators regularly conducting planned sessions on adolescent health, nutrition, and care
- **64** club management committees are developed with adolescents to enhance their leadership
- Directly engaged DGFP to function the Adolescent corner at UH&FWC level and function the Health Sessions in schools

## Theatre for Development (TfD)

Aims to establish a great way to reach various age groups using different art forms to share information and knowledge through the artists to make people aware of different issues related to nutrition, gender equality, health, and hygiene. TfD is one of the best ways to reach out to a large group of people, especially adolescents, and help them understand more about these essential issues delightfully.

### Key Achievements

- **64** TfD groups are formed who regularly conducting shows in community
- **8** recorded TfD shows are being displayed using 63 pico projectors to reach wider communities successfully

## Student Cabinet and Student Council

Aims to establish wonderful process, where adolescents will learn about self-respect, leadership, collaboration, decision-making, facilitation, democracy, and many other things. They will also know the election process of Bangladesh and will participate in an election to elect cabinet members for each educational institute.

### Key Achievements

- **2608** students received training on roles and responsibilities Student Cabinet/Council

## Functioning School Management Committee

Aims to build the capacity of School Management Committee (SMC) for well-functioning, including nutrition-related agenda in the regular SMC meetings.

### Key Achievements

- **327** SMCs are trained and most of them have annual activity plan including nutrition issue

## Several Campaigns at Schools

JANO runs and supports implementation of different campaigns (annual campaign, school health campaign and annual sports day) to enhance school students' knowledge on nutrition, health and hygiene, and gender. Student's participation in such campaigns increases their knowledge, agency and positive outlook.

### Key Achievements

- Successful conduction of campaigns in 331 schools
- Visible changes happened among parents and community people on gender stereotype concepts and their knowledge also increased on adolescents' nutrition, health, and hygiene



## Self-defence Karate Training to Girls Students

JANO project has provided self-defence karate training to 175 girls students from high schools. This self-defence karate training will build up the confidence level of the girls. It also builds the self-defence capacity of the girls. Adolescent girls will develop self-confidence by knowing the self-defence strategies and techniques which will be helpful for them to protect them from violence.

### Key Achievements

- 175 adolescent girls received training and are now teaching other girls from school and community

## COVID-19 Response

Aims to take necessary initiatives to provide need-based support to the adolescents from 331 educational institutions.

### Key Achievements

- A huge Number of students attended JANO Facebook class during pandemic
- Hygiene materials provided by JANO during school reopening played a great role to keep the students safe and protected

## Recommendations

- It is urgent to strengthen SRHR-related comprehensive education programs incorporated into the curriculum, the effective use of mass media, and supplying behavioral change communication materials.
- It is necessary to ensure proper safe disposal of sanitary napkins at school and home.
- Programs should involve more female teachers to reduce shyness among girls. A dedicated adolescent corner should be ensured for the adolescents to increase access to it and its optimum utilization.
- Programs should provide technical support to students who want to replicate school gardening.
- Basic GEMS sessions could be introduced from class three, comprehensively from class six considering the age-appropriate contents.

**Inference:** The JANO project activities increased adolescent knowledge on nutrition during their adolescent years, especially for girls. They are now reported being aware of the negative impact of the malnourishment cycle, which can have long-term effects on an individual's life. The project activities also increased adolescent knowledge and awareness level of pubertal changes, and girls are now more aware than boys. Girls are becoming more aware of menstruation, and boys are more aware of wet dreams, but there are still some misconceptions. Three-fourths of the girls are now using sanitary pads, but there is a knowledge gap regarding the frequency of changing pads. Adolescents are aware of GBV and its various forms, as well as the consequences of child marriage. The schools have improved toilet access, but soap is not available in some cases and there are some barriers in terms of student-toilet ratio and toilet cleanliness. Most of the adolescents are now eating maintaining the food diversity as learned from JANO interventions, and JANO activities are their primary source of information.



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