



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/empowering-women-groundbreaking-nutrition-program-bangladesh-significantly-reduces-child-stunting>

# By Empowering Women, Groundbreaking Nutrition Program in Bangladesh Significantly Reduces Child Stunting

Improving food security for the most vulnerable women, children, and families requires a multifaceted approach to address the root causes of hunger and poverty.

An innovative program in Bangladesh is demonstrating that integrating women's empowerment programs with more traditional health and nutrition interventions can make a big difference in saving and improving lives in impoverished communities, [helping more children live to celebrate their 5<sup>th</sup> Birthdays](#).

SHOUHARDO (the Bangla word for "friendship"), is a program jointly run by [CARE](#), the Government of Bangladesh, and [USAID's Food for Peace](#). The first phase of the program, implemented from 2004-2010, represented the largest non-emergency USAID food security program in the world, combining elements of economic capacity building, food production, maternal and child health and nutrition, and women's empowerment.

The results of the program have been impressive: child stunting due to undernutrition plummeted 28 percent in less than four years, nearly double the average for U.S. Government food security projects of this kind, and despite natural disasters and spikes in food prices occurring during the same time frame.

A [report by CARE](#) evaluating the results of the program identified women's empowerment as the "game-changer" that produced the greatest independent impact on the outcomes. Women who participated in empowerment interventions to help them fight harassment and expand their decision-making over household spending and food consumption were less likely to have stunted children than women who received only nutrition interventions, such as regular food rations.

The success of SHOUHARDO strongly supports the [already strong case for reducing gender inequality](#) as a critical measure to achieve global food security.

[Watch a video](#) on SHOUHARDO's success or [visit CARE.org](#) to learn about the next phase of this program.

Want to learn more about the role of women's empowerment in building health and nutrition? Check out our page on the [Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index](#) or to [watch a video](#) on the critical window of opportunity for good nutrition between pregnancy and 2 years old.