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The Leadership to Ensure Adequate Nutrition (LEAN) Project and Government Line Agencies Collaborate to End Malnutrition in the Chittagong Hill Tracts



Dr. Ruihla Aung Marma is a government officer who is working as a Health & Family Planning Officer at Rajsthali Upazila of Rangamati Hill District. He has been working steadfastly to improve the health service in his Upazila and, with his regular advice and cooperation, the nutrition and health scenario has consistently improved in Rajsthali Upazila. He provides services not only in Upazila Health Complex but also in community clinics, Union Health Complex and Paras and although his efforts have been met with initial success, Dr. Ruihla has struggled to connect with others in his region working in healthcare.

Since the start of the Leadership to Ensure Adequate Nutrition (LEAN) project, funded by the European Union, various initiatives have begun to facilitate increased participation of GoB line departments on nutrition annual planning, planning review workshops, budget allocation meeting and integration between direct and sensitive nutrition inter-sectoral program implementation process for better harmonization of nutrition services in Rajsthali Upazila at CHT. These efforts have improved horizontal and vertical coordination for a collaborative approach that addresses the systemic constraints that have hindered good nutrition governance in Bangladesh and which seeks to better support healthcare providers like Dr. Ruihla.

When the Health and Family Planning Ministry of Bangladesh government formed an Upazila Nutrition Coordinating Committee (UNCC) in August 2018, Mr. Ruihla was selected as a member and secretary in the committee. Through their collaboration, a nutrition plan and budget for the Rajsthali Upazila nutrition committee has been developed in collaboration with the LEAN project to increase the nutrition budget under committees' supervision. All these actions had created an effective impact on the nutritional status, nutrition governance on nutrition demand and supply of communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Simultaneously, Dr. Ruihla holds regular meetings on maternal and child health services to enhance the quality of maternal and child care in cooperation with project. The official in-charge of the Family Welfare Centre, Community Clinic and the Union Health Complex highlighted the progress, discussed the constraints and cooperation required, and highlighted the further assistance that they need from LEAN project. During these meetings, Dr. Ruihla has been raising awareness on nutrition sensitive programming by attending and exchanging his views on the forum of nutritious food intake, SAM & MAM services, maternal nutrition, adolescent health service regularly. Since he attended the meeting of the Union Standing Committee, he has also been raising awareness among women members of the Standing Committee on nutrition, diversified food and health hygiene. Dr. Ruihla wants to stay connected with LEAN activities as he has a great interest to work for community people to improve their knowledge and management of their own nutrition..

Dr. Ruihla explains that, if government line departments and NGOs work together, it is possible to improve nutritional status of Rajsthali Upazila, as well as CHT. It is envisioned that the given effort by the LEAN will influence various levels of GoB line agencies officials for implementing the project agenda for nutritional improvement.

