WFP in Bangladesh
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World Food Programme
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Boosting Food Security and Nutrition in Bangladesh

Food Security and Nutrition are essential to help Bangladesh advance on its path to reduce extreme poverty. When children are properly nourished, they grow up to be healthy and productive, and their families, communities and country thrive.

Well-nourished children are better able to learn in school, have higher IQs and earn higher wages as adults, which allows them to contribute more to the economic and social development of their family and their nation. Every US$1 spent on improving nutrition can have a US$30 return on investment.

In Bangladesh today seven million children under the age of 5 are chronically undernourished and one in four mothers is undernourished, including a high proportion who are still adolescent. Making nutrition a top priority will boost national growth and development, improve social equity and can empower girls and women.

Together with the Government of Bangladesh and multiple stakeholders, WFP is actively working to improve maternal and child nutrition; to increase primary school attendance and reduce short term hunger through school feeding; to support communities and households in enhancing resilience to natural disasters and the effects of climate change; and to support the strengthening of Government social safety nets and make them more nutrition sensitive. The involvement of women is key in all WFP-assisted programmes.

Over the past two decades, Bangladesh has significantly reduced poverty and child mortality, changes that will help propel the country towards its aim of attaining middle-income status - just imagine what Bangladesh can achieve without undernutrition.

**2013 Achievements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of people assisted through Country Programme and PRRO</td>
<td>1,826,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of school children assisted</td>
<td>1,141,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food- and cash-for-work participants</td>
<td>79,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training participants</td>
<td>199,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metric tons of food distributed</td>
<td>45,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash distributed (in US$)</td>
<td>2,929,321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Improving Maternal and Child Nutrition

WFP supports the Government to reduce maternal and child undernutrition and contribute to breaking the intergenerational cycle of undernutrition by improving the nutritional status of women and children.

Under a strategic partnership agreement with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, WFP carries out activities through government health structures to ensure ownership and sustainability. The focus is on the first 1,000 days, from conception to two years of age, when a lack of nutrients can impact the development of brain and body for a lifetime. Nutrition interventions during this time can have an immediate and long-term effect on children’s growth, health, learning ability, future productivity and income earning potential.

WFP ensures community members become actively involved in improving nutrition outcomes. Community health workers conduct systematic screenings in health facilities and communities to identify undernourished children aged 6-59 months, pregnant women and nursing mothers.

Severely undernourished children are referred to subdistrict (upazila) health complexes, while moderately undernourished children receive Super Cereal Plus, a specialized nutritious food made from wheat, soya, oil, milk powder and sugar, fortified with essential vitamins and minerals. Back at home, the Super Cereal Plus is cooked and eaten every day in addition to normal food. Children usually recover within 2.5 months.

Undernourished pregnant and nursing women receive oil and Super Cereal, a wheat-soya flour mixed with sugar and micronutrients, for the duration of their pregnancy and the period of exclusive breastfeeding, until their children reach six months of age.
Behaviour change communication on nutrition, infant and young child feeding, and hygiene and sanitation practices complements the food support. The sessions include mothers and other caregivers of undernourished children as well as other household and community members.

WFP also increasingly pursues nutrition objectives in other development programmes such as school feeding and social safety nets, and builds both institutional and human capacity in government entities delivering nutrition services. Further areas of work include collaboration on nutrition during emergencies; nutrition education in schools; rice fortification; and the coordination of nutrition activities across different sectors.
School Feeding

To reach the common goal of universal primary education, WFP works with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education to provide micronutrient-fortified biscuits to pre-primary and primary school children in high poverty prone areas. A WFP Capacity Support Unit is working within the Directorate of Primary Education.

The Government started a national school feeding programme in September 2011 which initially supported 55,000 students, reached 1.4 million children in 2012, and since 2013 is assisting more than 1.8 million children. Preparations are underway to double this reach and support more than 3 million schoolchildren in 2015.

WFP currently reaches 1 million schoolchildren in food-insecure and poverty-prone areas, and gradually transitions students to the government-led programme.

For families who cannot afford enough nutritious food every day, school feeding is a powerful incentive to enrol their children and ensure they attend class every day. The nutritious biscuits give children the energy to concentrate on their lessons and help address widespread micronutrient deficiencies. Fortified with essential vitamins and minerals, the biscuits ensure children meet 67 percent of their daily vitamin and mineral needs.

The school feeding programme also includes an essential learning package for the children as well as their parents, teachers and other community members. Activities focus on vegetable gardening, dietary diversity, health, nutrition and hygiene, and reinforcing good practices such as hand-washing. New awareness sessions on the harmful effects of child marriage and dowry were developed in 2013 and are now being delivered as part of the package.
To make school feeding more sustainable and enhance the programme so that it benefits whole communities, WFP works in partnership with the Government to start providing a hot lunch instead of biscuits. Since 2013, cooked meals have been introduced and are now reaching 20,000 students in two upazilas of Barguna and Jamalpur districts. Vegetables, fruit and spices are purchased from local women cultivators and cooked by women, helping entire communities to benefit from the school meals programme.

Enriched with vitamins and minerals, school feeding biscuits deliver a daily nutrient-boost and give children the energy to concentrate on their lessons.
Enhancing Resilience to Natural Disasters and the Effects of Climate Change

To improve communities’ resilience to natural disasters and the effects of climate change, and strengthen their agricultural production, WFP works with the Government of Bangladesh, community-based NGOs and Union and Upazila Disaster Management Committees to improve communities’ resilience to disasters and enhance joint preparedness and response capabilities.

In disaster-prone areas along the Jamuna river and the southern coastal belt, 80,000 people - more than 70 percent of them women - complete a two-year programme during which they construct or repair embankments, flood and cyclone shelters, raised roads, drainage and irrigation canals, and lift homesteads.

The schemes are identified in a local level planning process involving government officials, male and female community members and NGO staff. Together, they review community needs with a focus on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation infrastructure. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) assists technically in the construction and maintenance of assets and in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

In addition to asset creation, WFP through its NGO partners provides training on disaster preparedness, climate change adaptation and survival during crises as well as marketable skills useful to generate income. The participants also learn practical life skills in the areas of nutrition, hygiene and health as well as women empowerment. For the time and effort invested in work and training, remuneration is given in food and cash where WFP provides a diversified food basket and the Government, through LGED, provides the equivalent value in cash.
To increase physical resilience, communities work together on projects that protect their homes and fields, like this canal in Dacope which will help prevent waterlogging in the rainy season and irrigate fields in the dry season.

Self-employment plays an important role in sustaining and accelerating the gains made at household level. Therefore, since 2013, in the poorest areas women from participating households are trained on developing a small business in a third programme year. They receive a 12,000 taka cash grant for investment as well as a monthly cash transfer of 500 taka for consumption support. The monthly payment allows them to grow their investment and build their families’ economic resilience while covering their families’ day-to-day needs.
Strengthening Government Social Safety Nets

The Government of Bangladesh recognises social safety nets as a core area of its Poverty Reduction Strategy. The safety net budget represents 2 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for 2013-14 and the major social safety net programmes cover around 30 million people. However, studies suggest that national safety nets suffer from substantial duplication, leakage and inefficient targeting.

The Government of Bangladesh is establishing a comprehensive National Social Security Strategy, and in the fiscal year 2013-14 allocated US$2.5 billion, accounting for 11.4 percent of its budget. WFP has worked closely with development partners to support the Government in the finalisation of this strategy. In addition, WFP focuses on evidence creation and facilitating dialogue on the effectiveness of promotional safety nets. A capacity support unit has been established in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA).

WFP works to enhance the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme, the largest safety net programme in the country exclusively targeting women, to become more effective in helping participants to move out of extreme poverty and improve their food security and nutrition so that they need less assistance in future. WFP supports MoWCA to strengthen policies and programme design for effective implementation, and to enhance systems, tools and staff capacities in managing VGD.

MoWCA is now seeking to integrate the experience gained from the WFP Food Security for the Ultra Poor (FSUP) project, into their Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Programme.

From 2009 to 2012, FSUP supported 30,000 ultra-poor women through training on entrepreneurial skills, income generation, disaster preparedness
and nutrition. To put this knowledge to use, the women then received a 14,000 taka cash grant for investment, and a monthly cash allowance over two years to meet their basic family needs. At the end of the project, the average monthly income of participants had increased five-fold, savings had more than quadrupled and household assets had tripled. The women’s families consumed more and a wider range of food.

Together with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), WFP also conducts research to determine the benefits of five different types and combinations of social safety net transfers – including cash, food, and nutrition behaviour change communication (BCC) – with regard to three critical outcomes: household income, food security, and child nutrition. This research is expected to generate important evidence for policy makers and practitioners.
Ready for Emergencies

WFP stands ready to support the Government of Bangladesh in its response to emergencies. With offices in Dhaka, Rangpur, Sirajganj, Khulna, Barisal, Rangamati and Cox’s Bazar, WFP staff throughout the country is continuously monitoring and assessing the food security situation.

In the aftermath of a disaster, WFP plays a key role in coordinating and implementing rapid assessments to evaluate the food and nutrition needs among affected communities, and can speedily prepare a response. Food stored in warehouses in 15 locations, from Gaibandha in the north to Cox’s Bazar in the south, can be moved quickly to be in place for distribution. WFP has a standing agreement with the Government of Bangladesh, which provides up to 20,000 metric tons of rice for WFP to distribute in an emergency.

Together with the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, WFP co-leads the Food Security Cluster, a group of international NGOs, UN agencies, government representatives and donors established to coordinate disaster preparedness activities, information management and needs assessments as well as the food security response during a humanitarian crisis. The Cluster also builds capacity on disaster preparedness and response of humanitarian actors.

The Food Security Cluster has developed a contingency plan on cyclones as well as standard operating procedures, which provide a systematic overview of response activities.

Trainings on Emergency Food Security Needs Assessments have been provided to more than 100 enumerators focusing on different hazards in various regions. A resource pool has been created for capacity building of front line staff, and all participants have become part of a stand-by roster for
emergency food security assessments. To assist enumerators, a handbook is available which focuses on participatory methods of data collection during detailed food security and livelihood needs assessments.

In collaboration with the Nutrition Cluster, the Food Security Cluster has defined a standardized food package for the immediate response (1-7 days) as well as a food package for the short to medium term. Cash transfer values were standardized and clear guidelines were included in the contingency plan for cyclones.

In 2013, these methods and tools were invaluable in the preparation for Tropical Storm Mahasen, and in assessing and addressing the food and nutrition needs in its wake.
Assisting Refugees from Myanmar

Under a Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO), WFP works in strong partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs to provide food assistance to more than 32,000 registered refugees from Myanmar living in two government-managed refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar District. Due to restrictions on movement and employment, most refugees have no regular income and are highly dependent on assistance.

In 2014, WFP introduced an electronic FoodCard that works like a debit card and gives registered refugees the opportunity to purchase nutritious and diverse food according to their families’ needs and preferences. Registered traders inside the refugee camps offer a selection of rice, pulses, oil, eggs, vegetables, fruit, salt, sugar, spices, and dried fish.

The charge value is calculated based on price surveys in local markets and covers the food and nutrition needs of registered family members. Each card can only be used in combination with a fingerprint, making this one of the most secure and traceable systems for food distribution.

In addition, WFP continues special food assistance to the most vulnerable: pregnant and nursing women, young children and schoolchildren.

To help ensure children receive the nutrition they need during the critical first 1,000 days of life, WFP gives take-home rations of specialised nutritious food to pregnant women and nursing mothers as well as children aged 6-23 months and moderately undernourished children up to the age of 5.

WFP also provides micronutrient-fortified biscuits to children in primary and pre-schools as well as older children in non-formal primary education.
The snacks encourage students to attend class, give them the energy to focus on their lessons, and cover part of their micronutrient needs.

Next to food insecurity, inadequate practices in the areas of child care, water, sanitation and hygiene are key causes for persistent undernutrition. To improve knowledge, attitudes and practices, WFP works with partners to ensure nutrition education for women and other caregivers for small children.
Innovative Solutions to Improve Nutrition

Good nutrition from pregnancy through to a child’s second birthday is vital for proper brain development and physical growth. This time period is a unique 1,000 day window of opportunity that can give children the best possible start in life. Fortification of staple food and specialized nutritious food supplements provided during the first 1,000 days of life are two effective ways to ensure that those most at risk of vitamin and mineral deficiencies, such as women and children, receive the nutrients they need.

WFP works closely with the Government of Bangladesh to fortify rice and make it available for those most in need of extra nutrients. Rice makes up the largest part of most people’s daily diet and, if fortified, can deliver essential vitamins and minerals to help people lead an active and healthy life.

Rice is fortified by blending micronutrient kernels that look, cook and taste like rice with ordinary rice at a ratio of 1 to 100. An acceptability study among people who receive rice through major government safety nets showed that the participants liked the taste and smell of fortified rice, experience health benefits and would be willing to purchase it once it is available in their local market.

WFP plans to integrate fortified rice into all WFP-assisted programmes, and encourages garment factory owners to offer fortified rice in their canteens or sell it at concessional rates as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes to address micronutrient deficiencies of women garment workers. In addition, links are being made with the private sector to stimulate local production and marketing of fortified rice.

To give additional support to young children, WFP also works on developing and testing Complementary Food Supplements (CFS). During the first six months after birth, exclusive breastfeeding is essential to ensure children get all the nutrients they need and are protected from diarrhoea and other diseases.
After that period, breast milk is still required but is no longer enough to meet the infant’s nutritional needs, and complementary foods should be added to the child’s diet. Complementary Food Supplements (CFS), given in addition to breast milk and other foods, can help ensure children get all the nutrients they need.

In a research partnership of Johns Hopkins University, the International Centre of Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b), global science company DSM and WFP, two locally produced CFS have been trialled for their acceptability – how well children aged 6-24 months like the food – and effectiveness – how well they prevent stunting and wasting, and improve micronutrient status and cognition.

If the local products prove effective, WFP plans to integrate them into the Improving Maternal and Child Nutrition programme and WFP-assisted emergency responses, and will propose their use in government nutrition and safety net programmes. WFP stands ready to help establish high quality production capacity within Bangladesh, and explore options to make the food supplements available in the local market.
Donors and Funding

Contributions to the Country Programme in Bangladesh (CP200243) in 2013

Directed Contributions: US$14,079,000
Multilateral Contributions: US$5,517,858
TOTAL: US$19,596,858

Corporate Contributions to the Country Programme Bangladesh (CP200243) in 2013

Total: US$2,087,229
Contributions to the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation Assisting Refugees from Myanmar (PRRO200142) in 2013

Directed Contributions: US$3,584,041
Multilateral Contributions: US$1,056,368
TOTAL: US$4,640,409

WFP is grateful for the critical support provided by multilateral donors. Multilateral funds give WFP maximum flexibility to respond to urgent needs. Here are the top 10 multilateral donors to WFP globally in 2014: United Kingdom, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Canada, Italy, Ireland, Finland, Switzerland.