ADVOCACY PAPERS ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

OXFAM IN BANGLADESH

- UPR STAKEHOLDERS’ REPORT ON RIGHT TO FOOD IN BANGLADESH
- THEMATIC PAPER ON POST MDGs FRAMEWORK ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION
Background

Limitations of MDGs framework

Hunger and malnutrition have been in development debate for centuries but progress has been minimal. After years of studies, debates and negotiations, world leaders gathered at UN Headquarters in September 2000 to ratify the Millennium Declaration which center on halving poverty and improving the welfare of the world's poorest by 2015. In line with the Millennium Declaration, the UN systems agreed for a set of time bound and measurable goals and targets to assess progress over the period from 1990 to 2015. The MDGs include eight goals addressing income poverty, decent work and hunger (MDG1); primary education (MDG 2); gender inequalities (MDG 3); child and maternal health (MDGs 4 and 5); HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria (MDG 6); environmental sustainability including the loss of natural resources and biodiversity and access to water, sanitation, and good housing (MDG 7); and global partnerships (MDG 8).

Two years from the 2015 target date of the Millennium Development Goals, while there has been progress in reducing poverty in some regions, this progress has been uneven and the number of people living in poverty in some countries continue to increase, with women and children constituting the majority of the most affected groups, especially in the least developed countries. Though the Millennium Declaration made substantial reference to human rights, and the principles of freedom and equality, the MDGs absolutely departed from those principles, the basis from which the MDGs were drawn. One of the key limitations of the MDGs framework is that the MDG targets are basically some sectoral quantitative targets without focusing on the underlying causes of poverty and hunger. MDGs have been challenged for its target-driven and technocratic approach to development and concerns have been raised as to whether the MDGs pay sufficient attention to women and marginalized groups, and properly address national and global power inequities. The targets are not adequately focused on the poorest of the poor or on inequality within a country.

In respect of MDG Goal 1 (eradication of extreme poverty and hunger), target has been set on achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, although no date is set for its realization. For MDG target 1.A, extreme poverty is conceived as income poverty, measured principally by those living on less than $1 a day. Concerns have been raised about the focus on the indicator for poverty. In many countries, and through the passage of time, $1 a day is not enough for the poor to be able to afford basic goods for survival. Furthermore, poverty involves more than just a lack of income or a daily struggle for basic sustenance. It is now widely acknowledged that poverty is not confined only to economic deprivation but extends to social, cultural and political deprivation as well. But the goal does not necessarily require States to target the poorest of the poor or address income inequality or to address unequal power structure. Social security is also critical for those who are unable to actively participate in the economy and find work, particularly in the cases of old age, disability and maternity. But the goal does not set any target for social security measures.

In increasing the physical accessibility of food, the distribution of resources, including agricultural services and infrastructure, need to be sufficiently targeted to marginalized and vulnerable groups, including those regions where the poorest reside. Special attention needed
Looking Beyond MDGs 2015: Food Security and Nutrition

Background
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Limitations of MDGs framework
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In increasing the physical accessibility of food, the distribution of resources, including agricultural services and infrastructure, need to be sufficiently targeted to marginalized and vulnerable groups, including those regions where the poorest reside. Special attention needed
to be given to groups such as small farmers and landless labourers (through holistic agrarian reform and/or provision of secure tenure), fisher folk and forest users, by ensuring secure access to natural resources within a sustainable framework. The economic empowerment of women through increased and equal control over productive resources is also crucial. To ensure that food is economically accessible (affordable), states need to ensure that there is enough food available to keep prices in check and take steps to ensure that food remains affordable when its market price increases.

Notwithstanding the need for integrated efforts for ensuring food security, the MDGs (goal 1.3) partly reflects the right to food, in particular the right to freedom from hunger, but without any particular attention to the most marginalized and vulnerable. Though equitable national efforts are required to address the root causes of hunger, these have not been captured in the indicators.

The other key concerns as have been raised in many occasions are the absence of human rights based integrated approach to MDG-related development planning, monitoring and reporting, and the absence of enforceability and accountability mechanism.

MDGs are also primarily focused on developing countries. The international accountability mechanisms for the MDGs are particularly weak. While developing countries have taken incentives to adopt MDG-oriented plans, there has been no mechanism to ensure that the rich countries keep their promises (under goal 8) to assist developing countries to realize the other seven goals.

**MDGs implementation progress in Bangladesh**

Goal 1 of MDGs is on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger with three targets which are: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day; Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people; and Halve between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Bangladesh has made progress in achieving the MDGs goal 1. Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2010 estimated poverty rate is 31.5% which is positively an improvement to the poverty rate of 56.6% in 1991-92. However, since this HIES reports rate poverty using only the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) method and not the Direct Calorie Intake (DCI) method, this poverty estimation does not directly show the food security status. Notwithstanding the progress in poverty reduction, Bangladesh could not show progress in employment generation, creation of more decent wage employment for women, attaining food security, reducing income inequality. Labor Force Survey 2010, carried out by BBS, shows a low employment rate that is 59.3 % of the population with low participation of women (36%). The Millennium Development Goals, Bangladesh Progress Report 2011 reveals the increasing income inequality between the rich and the poor. Findings of HIES 2010 reveal that the incidence of rural poverty is higher than that of urban poverty and poverty ranged from 26% in Chittagong division to 46% in Rangpur division.

**Key challenges in relation to food security and nutrition in Bangladesh**

**Availability:** In recent years, Bangladesh has made progress in food grain production. Despite approaching self-sufficiency in rice, to ensure food availability in a sustainable manner, challenges remain in many areas. The conversion of arable land for non-agricultural purposes,
mining of essential nutrients and micro-nutrients and organic carbon from the top soils, and the depletion of ground water, are major challenges in sustaining future productive capacity. The climate change caused by global warming has also appeared as a severe threat to subsistence scale agricultural production in future.

Given the small and marginalized farmers’ contribution to food production, high production costs compounded with inadequate and inefficient subsidy mechanism, lack of fair price of agricultural products, lack of adequate storage facilities, faulty public procurement system and problems related to farmers’ access to market etc are some of the major constraints to sustained food production.

Women play important roles as producers of food, managers of natural resources, income earners, and caretakers of household food and nutrition security but women’s access to and control over land are still confined which negatively influences the food production.

**Accessibility:** Still, a large number of people remain unable to access food in the quantity, diversity and regularity required for a food secure life. According to the Welfare Monitoring Survey 2009 (A BBS Survey), 39.8% of the population thinks that they are food insecure. Regional disparities exist in the proportion of the population with less than 2,122 kcal/day. The evidence also suggests that female headed households and households in rural areas are more food insecure compared to their respective counterparts.

Food price hike and price instability have become a matter of grave concern particularly for the low income and fixed income people. The greatest impact of price hike is on poor households whose food to non-food shares are proportionately larger in household spending (68% of total household expenditures in the poorest 5% of households go on food compared to 33% in the richest 5% of households).

Bangladesh has wide coverage of social safety net (SSN) programs to tackle the hunger of poor people. Overall coverage of households benefiting from at least one SSN increased from 13.0% of households in 2005 to 24.6% in 2010 (HIES 2010). According to a Report of Central Monitoring Committee, 99 number of safety net programs are being implemented under 21 different ministries and divisions of Government. Whilst this represents substantial progress within five years, the coverage rate is still below the proportion of households that are poor. Challenges associated with the targeting, administration, monitoring and transparency of safety nets are widely discussed. Lack of coordination among the different agencies both within the government and beyond is a major constraint for improved achievement. Moreover, though the social safety nets help safeguard the food rights of millions of people; this is not implemented within a rights-based framework of entitlements, accountability and redressal.

**Utilization:** Progress in food utilization in terms of food safety and nutritional values is also upsetting. Low birth weight (36%), childhood malnutrition (41% stunting; 36% underweight; 16% wasting) and maternal malnutrition (25% CED) continue to be major nutritional problems in Bangladesh. In the Welfare survey 2009, the households who reported food insecurity mentioned that they manage such crisis by starving (54.3%), loan/borrowing (49.2%) and reducing favorite food (49.3%) and taking less food (39.3%) which signify poor food consumption level.
In a 2010 nutrition survey by Helen Keller International (HKI), BRAC University, and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, an estimated 45 percent of children under five were found too short for their age group (stunted), a sign of vitamin and mineral deficiency. Six out of 10 households in Bangladesh - including some 10 million children - did not have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food in 2010, according to the food security and nutrition survey by HKI and its Bangladeshi partners.

Growth retardation, an outcome of chronic under nutrition, is widespread, affecting almost one in two of the country’s 17 million children below five years of age (Household Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (HFSNA 2009). According to Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey(BDHS,2011), forty-one percent (41%) of all children younger than 5 years old suffer from stunted growth while 16 % are wasted. The combination of stunting and wasting causes thirty-six percent (36%) of all under-5 children to suffer from being underweight (BDHS 2011). It may be noted that for a country like Bangladesh, both food intake quality and awareness on nutrition are important to address malnutrition of mother and children.

Food adulteration with poisonous chemicals has reached a dangerous proportion posing serious health hazards in the country. Basic food items on the market like rice, fish, fruits, vegetables, and sweetmeats are adulterated with hazardous chemicals in an indiscriminate manner. Access to safe drinking water is another crucial component and urban poor are more vulnerable compared to the rural poor.

Global Factors: Although domestic production of rice shows a surplus, the country has to depend on international markets for most other essential food items which include wheat, sugar, pulse, onion, turmeric etc. As an importing country, any changes in the policy and restrictions on the exporting countries immediately affect the domestic markets in soaring domestic prices. Moreover, global price increase also result in increasing the price in local markets as experienced during 2007-08 global price crisis. Due to the loss of production in some food exporting countries due to adverse weather events, experts are apprehending for the crisis like 2007-2008. Bangladesh as an importing country is likely to be a victim of the situation, if appropriate precautionary policy measures are not taken at national and global level.

Exclusion and Vulnerability to Food Security: In a recent baseline survey (2011) on the human rights situation in Bangladesh conducted by NHRC, the respondents from the indigenous communities reported that lack of equal opportunities for employment, and land disputes are major problems facing by them which indicate the vulnerability to food security of the indigenous people of the country.

Food Security Strategies of The People Living in Haor Areas: Status and Prospects (October 2010) explored that over two-fifths of the survey households suffered from normal food insecurity, about one-third from moderate food insecurity and near one-fifth from severe food insecurity. Such vulnerable situations require special attention and priority consideration for victims of natural disasters, people living in disaster-prone areas and other specially disadvantaged groups.

Bangladesh’s Policy and Program Framework
Bangladesh has a comprehensive food security policy framework that includes National Food Policy 2006, followed by the National Food Policy and Plan of Action (2008-2015), and an
investment plan named the Bangladesh Country Investment Plan, a road map towards investment in agriculture, food security and nutrition. Besides, the specific policy framework on food security, food security issues have been well reflected in other major policy and program documents, such as, ‘Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2021: Making Vision 2021 a Reality’, Sixth Five Year Plan for FY 2011-2015.

There are also quite a large number of policy instruments related to agriculture, food security and rural development. While these documents are complementary to each other, in some cases they contradict each other. In some cases, there are repetitions of the same policies too. Besides, due to the involvement of multiple ministries lack of coordination hinders the effective progress. The NFP, PoA and CIP could provide pathway both for a unifying policy framework and a coordinating institutional mechanism.

CIP, as a five-year investment plan for food security and agriculture for Bangladesh, does not carry any major discrepancy in terms of policy, planning and strategies between these documents and is fully mainstreamed into the 6th Five Year Plan. However, a greater degree of inconsistencies are found at the implementation level. National Food Policy Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan Monitoring Report 2012 reveals slow and uneven implementation progress, as indicated by a delivery of just 51% of the budget available for the financial year 2010/11, but impressive increase of the funding of food security and nutrition investments (+ 2.2 Billion USD in 2010/11 for a total of 5.2 billion financed).

**International Cooperation**: To establish a sustainable food security regime, indigenous supply has to be the main contributor to the supply side, leaving the rest to import. But, as an economically stressed developing country, Bangladesh cannot be expected to meet the challenges of upholding the right to food on their own, especially in the wake of crop losses in years from unfavorable weather conditions. International cooperation is required in this regard both in terms of technological and financial assistance to achieve the progressive realization of the right to food in Bangladesh. On the other hand, as an importing country, Bangladesh’s food security situation is affected by the unjust trade policies and practices at global level such as trade barriers/restriction by food exporting countries, increasing alternative uses of food for the purposes like producing bio-fuels and calls for reforms in the global trade policies, and practices to ensure adequate food supply even in times of crisis.

**Key asks at national and international level**

**National**

- Adopt a legal framework on right to food, and introduce right based approach to programing on food security for progressive realization of the right to adequate food;
- Ensure right based approach in the development of Social Protection Strategy currently under development and adopt a unified policy on right based Social Safety Net or Social Protection programs linking with long term development programs on agriculture, food security and nutrition;
- Consider emerging challenges affecting food security like climate change, urbanization, price volatility and financial market instability in designing and implementing food security initiatives; and ensure better coordination among the existing programs;
- Adopt National Agriculture Policy with necessary revisions for ensuring coherence with all agriculture and food security and nutrition policy framework and ensure coherence and efficient coordination among all the relevant implementing agencies;
• Take measures to strengthen agricultural research works with a particular focus on agro ecological peculiarities and climate resilient crop varieties;
• Ensure a strong and frequently updated information system on agriculture, food security and nutrition for accurate projection on the need of the farmers, and for proper planning and monitoring; Strengthen the progress monitoring process by involving a multi stakeholder participatory process;
• Ensure adequate subsidy for the agricultural inputs and strengthen the distribution system to prevent any form of irregularity in the system. Take measures to strengthen the capacity of the relevant govt. institutions such as, Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation(BADC), Department of Agricultural Extension(DAE) and empower them to ensure timely and quality services required for the farmers; Ensure incessant initiatives on storage, agro processing, and marketing in adequate and efficient manner;
• Scale up investment to modernize the functioning of state-run TCB, including opening up its branches in different divisions of the country and strengthen the market monitoring to stabilize the food prices;
• Increase the financial investments in the fisheries and livestock sectors as part of comprehensive agriculture, take measures to enhance the capacity of the implementing agencies of these sectors, and update/review existing policies on the livestock sector to encourage private investment;
• Update land use policy and ensure its proper implementation to stop using agriculture land for non-agriculture activities (urbanisation, industrialisation, setting up house, market etc) following FAO voluntary guideline on land;
• Take appropriate legal and administrative steps to ensure land rights of the indigenous people while recognizing traditional rights to land of the indigenous people living in the hill tracts or other forest areas;
• Adopt community based nutrition programs targeting both rural and urban area following a life cycle approach and ensure that such interventions are consistent with local ecosystems and prioritize local solutions and are consistent with the objective of moving towards sustainable diets;
• Massive awareness raising among the consumers on the food safety issues and strengthen the legal and the regulatory regime of consumer protection in the country along with strong monitoring systems; ensure better coordination between food safety inspection and enforcement agencies;
• Ensure adequate financing for timely and proper implementation of the planned interventions in the area of food security.

International
• Secure pro farmers position in negotiation in WTO to protect the rights of the small and marginalized farmers as far as agriculture is concerned; and takes effective measures that agriculture products get the duty free and quota free market access to the international markets;
• Take effective steps to set up regional and international virtual food banks with the commitments of food availability to countries stressed by food insecurity and furthering the process of making such arrangement operational, in cases where such arrangement has already been made, for example, SAARC Food Bank.
• Include the food security concerns in the agriculture related trade negotiations from a food security perspective; introduce new rules and disciplines to prevent export restrictions/barriers by food exporting countries and ensure continuing food exports to the Least Developed Countries(LDCs) at affordable prices even during the crisis period;
• Increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) and ensure that developed countries/development partners realize their commitments of ODA for the development of agriculture and food security. This can be followed up under MDGs Framework and upcoming Post 2015 process besides ongoing process like CoP.

Context of post 2015
Often the MDGs framework is criticized as “donor/UN driven” process and Post 2015 process provides the opportunity to engage all level of stakeholders. In 2011, the UN Secretary General in his annual report ‘Accelerating progress towards the MDGs: options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015’ articulated the importance to look at options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. These include the need to foster an inclusive, open and transparent consultation process with multi-stakeholder participation to ensure incorporation of the lessons learned and experiences from all stakeholders. This was reinforced during Rio+20 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be discussed again in 2013 at UN assembly. Under this process, the UN will organize consultations at the national level in up to 50 countries and Bangladesh is one of those. Other forms of consultations have also been started at national and global level which includes mobilization, web platform and crowd sourcing.

Suggested principles for Post 2015 development framework
The post-2015 framework for development needs to address the interlinked global challenges of food security, poverty eradication, social and economic equity, gender equality, climate change, resilience, equitable distribution of resources, and environmental sustainability. It should base on the principles of human rights, equity and equality, participation, accountability, and shared but differentiated responsibility.

Suggested framework for Post 2015 specific to food security and nutrition
Mostly discussed criticisms against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include over emphasis on quantity, sectoral and isolated goals, absence of universal values of equality and human rights. Given the experience of the MDGs, the Post MDGs framework should not deliver several isolated goals alone. Rather the framework should ensure holistic and integrated framework to address prevailing development challenges. The framework should use human rights language thereby spelling out the entitlements of the people rather than mere opportunities and services and opening up the space for ensuring accountability of the governments. With specific to food security and nutrition, the framework should impart a food production system based on the principles of food sovereignty and human rights and strengthen the implementation of right to food to eradicate hunger and malnutrition through the promotion of international cooperation and coherence.

To achieve the vision of ending hunger and ensure food security for all, the framework should be built on specific objectives of: (1) ensure access to adequate food for all in sustainable manner and irrespective of geographical location as well as socio economic status of the people; (2) ensure consumption of safe and quality food with adequate nutritional values; and (3) strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure good governance in all related machineries.
While developing the goals and indicators, an integrated approach must be followed to ensure that an enabling policy environment are created at the national and international levels involving both state and non-state actors and organizations. The framework must also ensure that the economic and social exclusions as well as climate change and disasters that cause food insecurity for certain groups/communities are well addressed, access to associated services (health, crop insurance, land use, market linkage, preservation of agricultural products etc.) are well facilitated.

The Post MDGs framework must create formal scope for CSOs engagement in monitoring the progress. UPR model exercised by UN Human Rights Council and FAO introduced CFS mechanism could be followed along with formation and empowering of Multi Stakeholders’ Forum/ Council for Food Security and Nutrition.

**Suggested Goals and Targets**

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<td><strong>Goal: Ensuring food security and nutrition for all</strong></td>
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| **Target 1: Ensure adequate food availability** | - Increase production of non staple crops  
- Subsidy and credit facilities to the small and marginalized farmers  
- Women’s right to land ownership  
- Control over/access to land and natural resources of the poor and marginalized people  
- Women economic empowerment  
- Efficient and appropriate market mechanism to ensure small farmers’ access to market facilities  
- Agriculture research strengthened  
- Cultivation of climate resilient food varieties  
- Land use policy revised and implemented  
- Increased allocation for the disadvantaged/ back warded regions' agriculture |
| **Target 2: Ensure access to adequate food for all in sustainable manner** | - Sustained employment increased  
- Gender equality in all aspects of employment  
- Employment for the marginalized people  
- Coverage of SSNs increased and adoption of unified right based legal framework on SSNs  
- Rights in work/ Minimum wage in domestic law  
- Support to the self employment/SMEs  
- Strengthen state institutions like TCB to keep food prices under control/stable |
| **Target 3: Ensure consumption of safe and quality food with adequate nutritional values;** | - Legal and regulatory framework for protection of consumers’ rights  
- Community based nutrition programme following life cycle approach  
- Support to promotion of local nutritional food  
- Number of underweight/stunted/wasted child |
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| Target 4: Strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure good governance in all related machineries | - Legal framework developed to ensure food security  
- Multi stakeholder participatory monitoring process operational |
| Target 5: International Cooperation | - Duty free market access of agricultural products to the international markets  
- rules and disciplines to prevent export restrictions/barriers by food exporting countries  
- Food exports to the Least Developed Countries(LDCs) at affordable prices even during the crisis period  
- Developed countries/development partners realize their commitments of ODA for the development of agriculture and food security |

## End Notes
