



# Bulletin

## Policy Support & Advocacy Cluster



### UNDP Administrator visits Bangladesh



An Internal Knowledge Fair was organized by UNDP Bangladesh on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2008. This was a first of a kind event which helped to strengthen the platform for knowledge and experience sharing. The fair was organized on light of the visit of Kemal Dervis's, UNDP Administrator, to Bangladesh.

The Knowledge Fair was part of a broader programme of the UNDP Administrator's convention with staff members of the country office. It was organized to enliven the activities and initiatives taken through diverse

programmes and projects of UNDP Bangladesh.

The fair showcased six stalls which were designed on the basis of thematic areas: **UN Bangladesh, Directorate, Governance, MDGs and Poverty Reduction, Environment & Energy, Crisis prevention & recovery**

Each stall was set to showcase publications, reports and photographs depicting various accomplishments of UNDP CO. The stalls were in U-shaped with a panel of photographs behind each of them. Each stall also had two computers where the clusters could display any pictures or videos. The room had two projector screens showing imperative initiations like Election and MDGs animated series, undertaken by the country office. Considerable emphasis was given to pictorial depictions of activities and this made the whole knowledge fair very attractive.

This initiative undertaken by the Country Office was the first-ever of such event which helped to promote the activities. It also facilitated face-to-face networking between Administrator and HQ staff who were present there. The event helped to strengthen the dynamic advocacy situation and stimulated interests in CO activities.

In order to hold the fair in a structured way, an Organizing Committee consisting of focal points from each cluster was set up. The committee met for 15 days till the day of the event to regularly update about the preparation of event.

After the event, the Administrator spoke to the staff members and answered to some of their queries. He highlighted the fact that the rising food prices are a big concern for the people of Bangladesh where around 40% lives below poverty line.

Mr Dervis also mentioned that the role of international community cannot be ignored while considering adopting strategies to protect Bangladesh from these shocks. He noted that Bangladesh is determined to build stronger democratic institutions and deeper practices of democracy.

Mr Dervis traveled to south of Dhaka to visit UNDP supported projects of voter registration and slum dwellers.



*"I had the opportunity to see with my own eyes the resilience of the people of Bangladesh in the face of considerable economic hardship"*

*-Kemal Dervis, UNDP Administrator*

## *Perspective*

# Food Security in Bangladesh

The dimension of security has been changed. The world is facing many different security problems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Food is one of them. Food has already been added as a security threat towards world peace. Most of the developing countries are facing this problem. Now, in Bangladesh, food security is a burning issue.

### **Food Security:**

According to the definition of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), "Food security exists when all people, at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

### **Food insecurity in Bangladesh:**

When people cannot get sufficient food according to their demand, it is called food insecurity. For a man, 2000-2200 kilocalories is required daily on an average and where people intake below this threshold, they are food insecure and tend to experience the symptoms of malnutrition, unable to learn or to work, and have reduced resistance to disease. The present situation of Bangladesh is miserable for low and middle income people. In Bangladesh, 40% people live under poverty and they spend 80% of their total income for buying food. FAO included Bangladesh in the list of 36 food aid crisis countries. FAO has identified two key reasons for prevailing food crisis in Bangladesh, one is 2 floods and another is cyclone 'Sidr'. WFP seeks \$ 15 million for Bangladesh's food shortage. Josette Sheran (executive director of WFP) warned, without sufficient food aid, WFP would have to reduce its global food aid operations because of rising food and oil prices. The acting country director of WFP Edward Kallan added that WFP has received only \$37 million in response to the \$ 52 million for emergency appeal in the aftermath of Sidr. On the contrary, the USAID was forced to cut \$ 120 million from future aid programme to pay for emergency aid needs. Recently International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) remarked Bangladesh's political and social unrest due to price hike "a serious security issue".

### **Causes of food insecurity**

After 1974 Bangladesh never experienced such food crisis for the couple of years. There are many reasons behind this food crisis:-

- **Population Growth:** Overall population growth in Bangladesh creates severe pressure on food security. The cultivated land is reduced everyday to accommodate this growing population.
- **Climate Change:** Owing to global warming, Bangladesh is suffering from predicted increase of floods, droughts, cyclone that has already been a serious short term cause of food insecurity. For these natural calamities, rice of \$600 million has been destroyed which causes food crisis.
- **Price Hike & Bangladesh:** As a part of globalization Bangladesh cannot avoid global impact. This why like other developing countries Bangladesh is also affected by rising food price in international market.

**Causes of price hike:** Among all food items the significance of rice is supreme. Since Bangladesh's staple food is rice, so the country is greatly affected by price hike of rice.

- **Price Hike of Energy-fuel:** The skyrocketing price of energy-fuel affected the world food market. As a consequence, this price hike of energy-fuel also affects Bangladesh.
- **Increasing Demand:** Due to increasing demand, the food stock is becoming less. According to the statement of International Food Policy Research Institution (IFPRI), there is no possibility of reducing food price in the upcoming years. As a consequence, like other importing countries Bangladesh is also affected by this adverse situation.
- **Reducing Production:** According to the report of IRRI, in 2025 the demand of rice globally will be 880 million



Source: Independent Bangladesh

ton which is 70% more than present production. But simultaneously production is not increasing accordingly. In Bangladesh many agro lands are converted into fisheries that has lessen the production of food grains.

- **Import Dependency** Bangladesh is one of the prime rice importing countries. Since crops were destroyed due to floods and cyclone Sidr, the expenditure of importing has been raised dramatically. For instance, 28.99 lakh metric tons rice and wheat were imported during July 2007 to February 2008. On the contrary, 13.87 lakh metric tons rice and wheat were imported during the same period of the previous financial year.
- **Declaration of Export restriction:** Since the demand of rice has been raised so rice exporting states are taking various strategies in terms of exporting rice to ensure their own food security. They have imposed some terms and conditions or stopped exporting rice. For instance, India has now raised the price of rice per ton \$ 1000. As a result, Bangladesh is passing ominous Situation.
- **Bio-fuels:** Another reason for price hike of food is increasing demand and production of bio-fuels.
- **Others:** In Bangladesh the great impediment of production is insufficient supply of power and fertilizer in time.



Source: Worldpress.com

**Measures To Be taken:** Bangladesh can overcome this food crisis if proper measures are implemented.

- The first and foremost measure is to increase domestic food production at any cost. Yearly rice production should be 3 lakh metric tons more and we have to be less dependent on world market.
  - For increasing food production what is mostly important is to ensure proper supply of power and energy in time so that farmers can easily cultivate there their lands.
  - Khash lands have to be allocated among the landless peasants which will facilitate the rising production.
- At least 12-14 lakh metric tons food stocks should be maintained by the government so that the domestic market remains stable during food crisis.
  - Increasing subsidy is another significant measure that should be increased in agriculture sector.
  - The agro-based agencies like BADC, BARI should be strengthened as well as government should give more emphasize in agro-based research and scientific cultivation.
  - Proper coordination should be established between Bureau of Statistics and Agriculture Extension Department for reliable statistics.
  - Last of all people of Bangladesh have to change their food habit, they should reduce absolute dependency on rice. For instance, potato and casava can be alternative food of rice.

Above all, Bangladesh is passing now an ominous situation. What is very important now, Government has to take proper initiatives along with the policymakers, think tanks, and political parties to overcome the current food crisis, because in future the situation will be worse globally and no doubt Bangladesh will be affected gravely.

**By Uma Das**  
**Young Professional Officer**  
**Registry & Reception**

#### **Disclaimer**

**“The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations or UNDP.”**

## Monthly Development Focus-March 2008

### Price hike raises concern

Analysts have raised their concern over the continued increase in prices both globally and nationally. Dr Akbar Ali Khan highlighted that although 40 percent of the country's population are categorized as poor according to official statistics, the rate of poverty has gone up and a larger section is starving as prices of essentials have increased by 20 to 25 percent and income rose only by 5 percent. Other economists suggested that Government will have to take effective measures including safety net programmes to mitigate hardship of the mass, caused by the soaring prices of food items.



Source: Sunday Herald

Global food prices, based on United Nations records, rose 35 percent in the year to the end of January, markedly accelerating an upturn that began, gently at first, in 2002. Since then, prices have risen 65 percent. In addition, according to the Weekly Economic Times, Bangladesh Bank governor suggested that the country should prepare itself for a strong food reserve after the boro crop harvest to face any future adversities like floods. The World Food Programme says high global fuel prices coupled with an increased demand for food in wealthier Asian and Latin American markets and an increased demand for bio-fuel are behind food price rises around the world.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation has warned that rising prices have triggered a food crisis in 36 countries, all of which will need extra help. The Sunday Herald cited that high prices have already prompted a string of food protests around the world, with tortilla riots in Mexico, disputes over food rationing in West Bengal and protests over grain prices in Senegal, Mauritania and other parts of Africa. In Yemen, children have marched to highlight their hunger, while in London last week hundreds of pig farmers protested outside Downing Street. It also added that If prices keep rising, more and more people around the globe will be unable to afford the food they need to stay alive, and without help they will become desperate. More food riots will flare up, governments will totter and millions could die.

Source: Internet

### Induction Course for newly recruited Project Staff



The Policy Support and Advocacy Cluster organized an Induction Course on 17 March 2008 for the newly recruited project staffs.

One of the major objectives of the Induction Course is promoting knowledge among new staff members and service areas of responsibility to ensure staffs are fully conversant with UNDP's aim and objective and to make new employees aware of how they can contribute to the performance of their department.

The Induction Course for the project staff was designed to cater their understanding of the framework of UNDP and provides an overview of the organization's activities and their areas of work.

The participants appreciated such initiative by the cluster which gave them an overall guidance of the organization.

One of the participants commented that *"Suggestions, directions and recommendations on field level operational modalities are really excellent and realistic."*

Another participant mentioned that they have learned lot of important things and they are now clear about UNDP'S mission, MDGs and other issues clearly."

One of the new recruits nicely evaluated the induction sessions by mentioning that the sessions will benefit his work. He especially emphasized the session on Ethics which he is going to remember for ever.