

Bangladesh Mission Food Security Strategy
For new Title II Development Assistance Programs
In the FY 2006 Review Cycle

The United States Government (USG), as represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), Office of U.S. Food For Peace (FFP), through USAID/Bangladesh, will be encouraging the submission of FY 2006 Title II Development Assistance Program (DAP) proposals from registered Title II Cooperating Sponsors (CSs) to implement food security programs in Bangladesh complementary to the approved food security strategy of the USAID/Bangladesh Mission (see Section D, Reference Sources).

The purpose of this strategy statement is to disseminate information to prospective CSs to help guide their formulation of Title II development food aid program proposals as may be submitted this winter in response to the DCHA/FFP FY 2006 cycle for new DAP Proposals. The proposal submission deadline is expected to be o/a FH February 2005.

This general description provides: (A) a background of food insecurity and Title II program history in Bangladesh; (B) desirable food security program strategies and types of activities which are encouraged by the Mission; (C) identification of important considerations and criteria which are expected to be used by the Mission in reviewing and evaluating subsequent and/or parallel proposals for development assistance; (D) reference to useful materials available on the Internet.

A. BACKGROUND

1. Food Aid and Food Security Policy

Drawing on 1990 legislative reforms to P. L. 480, USAID in 1992 issued a broad definition of food security: “When all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life.” This definition further noted that “three distinct variables are central to the attainment of food security: availability, access, and utilization.” In 2004, the Office of the Food for Peace incorporated “risk” as a fourth component of food security. These variables are interrelated and their various forms are given further definition in the USAID Policy Paper: Food Aid and Food Security (see Section D, References).

Food security is the condition in which all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life. Food security is dependent upon agricultural production, food imports and food aid, employment opportunities and income earnings, intra-household decision making and resource allocation, and health and nutrition care utilization and caring practices. It is a multi-dimensional development topic that requires cross-sectoral integrated interventions.

Bangladesh is a country of 135 million populations with a per capita income of \$440. Poverty alleviation is a core challenge for Bangladesh. Because of poverty, malnutrition

is a fundamental problem. To reduce poverty in Bangladesh, it is crucial to develop and improve the capacities of its most vulnerable populations and regions. For this, Bangladesh needs to accelerate the growth and productivity of its agriculture and non-farm sectors, improve the quality of social services, ensure proper functioning of its community and rural institutions and expand the rural support infrastructures.

Over the last three decades food grain production in Bangladesh has more than doubled - rice and wheat production has increased from around 10 million metric tons in the early 1970s to 25 million metric tons by the early 2000s. However, nearly half of the population still cannot afford an adequate diet. Also, as much of the countryside lies in disaster-prone, largely flood plain areas, annual flooding, occasional flash flooding together with other periodic natural disasters, often cause crop damage and food shortages for the vulnerable population. These risks and uncertainties lead to transitory food insecurity.

The major food security problem is that around half of the Bangladeshis remain below the established food based poverty line and as many as one third are in extreme poverty and severely undernourished despite the impressive increases in aggregate national food grain availability. Success in making staple foods available coexists with very high prevalence of undernourishment (insufficient caloric intake) and malnutrition. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 2000 the malnutrition problem was desperately serious for the poorest 14% of the rural population who were consuming fewer than 1600 kcal per day. Another 10% consumed between 1600 and 1800 kcal per day and around 23% consumed between 1800 and 2122 kcal, the minimum caloric requirement to be food secure, 45% of women had low (<18.5) body mass indices and 52% of children were underweight.

Lack of agricultural lands, employment opportunities, social services, access and knowledge of nutritional diet and healthcare, sanitation and safe drinking water coupled with sustained poverty leave a significant portion of the Bangladesh population hungry and malnourished. To alleviate these problems, USAID focuses its resources on long-term sustainable development. Within a framework of law and USG policy and interests, USAID invests in people and processes, and promotes policies and institutional environments which attack the primary basic cause of food insecurity and hunger - namely, poverty, especially in rural areas. Agency priorities for Title II development programs as set forth in the 1995 Food Security Policy Paper focus on improving household nutrition and health status, especially for children and mothers, and on increasing agricultural productivity, including field production, post-harvest handling, transportation and marketing.

Program foci for improving food availability, access, utilization, and risk management include closing the seasonal food gap through improved storage, small-scale post-harvest transportation, crop diversification (but not at the expense of food crops), expanded market opportunities, enhanced knowledge of dietary diversity and restoration of food value, and on overcoming household cash flow and liquidity constraints, enhancing local capacity for disaster risk management, and improved coping mechanisms for disasters

like flood and cyclone. The focus on food utilization places a major emphasis on changing critical nutrition (diet, care and feeding) and health enhancing behaviors. Improved food utilization includes such areas as basic education, maternal and child health, control of infectious diseases, crop and food diversification activities and improvements in water and sanitation. In addition, disaster risk management and enhanced coping mechanism can help reduce life and asset losses or minimize distress sales and contingency plans can foster quick post-disaster recovery.

2. The Gender Dimensions of Food Security

Gender relates to the socially assigned position and behavior of men and women. It affects the allocation of resources and work, decision-making and power, and the enjoyment of rights and entitlements within the family as well as in public life. Men and women have different roles and responsibilities in their individual lives, in their families and households, and in their communities. Both men and women are income earners and agricultural producers. Within the family, the women's responsibilities often involve care provision for their families and intra-household food distribution. Women also play a vital role in the processing and preparation of food, and frequently use their own earned income in support of their children. Women seeking to make these significant family contributions frequently have only limited access to the necessary resources, or to the related decision-making processes of family resource allocation and use.

Individual and household food security is affected by individual actions and choices men and women make in producing food, earning income or acquiring assets, and feeding and caring for family members. Thus, it is critical to ensure equitable access to—and control over—the resources needed to meet their respective roles and responsibilities. Indeed, overcoming gender-based inequities in resource access and decision making could very much enhance women's contributions to food security and ultimately result in significant nutritional benefits to the family.

Females in Bangladesh, including pregnant females, nursing mothers and children, are especially vulnerable to malnutrition, and the gap between females and males actually increased in the 1990s. Gender imbalances are a striking feature of social indicators in education, health and not least in food security and nutrition in Bangladesh.

Food security risks and vulnerabilities for women and girls increase even more during disasters for a variety of reasons. Women are less likely to utilize disaster shelters and are often the last to leave the household compound in disaster situations. Their responsibilities to protect and maintain family and households are compounded during disasters and increase their workloads. Men may migrate to urban areas during disasters in search of work leaving women as *de facto* heads of households. Women are more likely to be cut off from disaster warnings or other information since many rural women have no access to radio, television, or other media sources.

Within Bangladesh, women bear a disproportionately large share of the country's poverty and food insecurity. Whatever indicator one takes, be it education, nutrition or employment, women are generally worse off than men. There are a number of inherent

difficulties in addressing women's needs and concerns effectively through development interventions. A major part of the problem lies in not reaching women effectively in different situations and settings, especially those who belong to asset-less, asset-poor, and socially vulnerable households, thereby enabling them to have a voice in designing and shaping the interventions.

3. Title II Programs in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, being one of the most food insecure countries of the world, has received P.L. 480 Title II food assistance since 1972. During the first three years (1972-74) of the Title II program in Bangladesh, food aid was almost exclusively emergency assistance, helping the GOB feed people displaced by the nine-month war of independence. The subsequent programs, implemented by CARE into the mid-eighties, consisted of food for work programs, primarily through earth moving for road and canal rehabilitation. The introduction of food monetization during 1982-83 allowed CARE's Title II program to introduce appurtenant structures in the road rehabilitation program. CARE's Integrated Food for Development Program (1994-99) reflected a shift towards development on the relief-to-development continuum, with approximately 70% of the Title II resources undergoing monetization to fund larger scale, higher quality community-based rural infrastructure. The follow-on CARE program (1999-2004) was 100% monetized, which enabled CARE to implement a wide array of developmental activities such as low cost paved rural roads, flood proofing, urban slum development, local government capacity building and training, and disaster management.

Currently there are three Title II development programs operating in Bangladesh inclusive of two new start-up programs approved for FY 2005. The ongoing Food Security Enhancement Initiative implemented by World Vision and two new start-ups, Jibon O Jibika (Life and Livelihood), implemented by Save the Children Federation Inc. (SC), and SHOUHARDO (meaning "amity"), implemented by CARE.

The ongoing Title II five-year program (FY00-FY05) with World Vision, which began in FY 2000 and ends in FY 2005, is focused on improvement of food security in 16 of the country's 469 sub-districts. The World Vision activities are in water and sanitation, agriculture, rural roads and other infrastructure, and disaster management. The program also includes a direct distribution component utilizing approximately 20% of the approved program commodities. The World Vision program monetizes Title II commodities through the Government of Bangladesh (GOB). The two new programs with CARE and SC will pilot monetization through private channels and are expected to continue after a successful piloting. While the monetization process through the GOB itself is relatively simple, the transfer of local currency by the GOB to the Cooperating Sponsor's accounts, at which time it becomes available to support program activities, is commonly a lengthy, tedious process.

The new CARE Bangladesh DAP, "SHOUHARDO" will work towards four specific objectives in 2000 villages and 130 urban slums:

- 1) Improved availability and economic access to food for targeted vulnerable households through strengthening livelihoods, securing entitlements and

- enhancing accountability of service providers
- 2) Sustainable improvement in the health and nutrition of project participants
- 3) Enhanced empowerment of women and girls from targeted vulnerable households
- 4) Targeted communities and institutions are better able to prepare for, mitigate and respond to natural disasters.

The SHOUHARDO program area will primarily cover the most food-insecure areas of Dhaka, Chittagong, and Rajshahi divisions with the emphasis on *Haor*, riverine, and coastal areas in accordance with the latest vulnerability assessment maps jointly developed by the WFP and the GOB.

The new SC DAP, Jibob-O-Jibika program will focus on innovative nutritional behavior change methodologies in areas of high malnutrition in some of the most food-insecure and vulnerable coastal populations in Bangladesh. The goal of this proposed SC program is to decrease household food insecurity in three Districts of Barisal, Patuakhali, and Bhola. To address food insecurity within the target areas, SC has established three strategic objectives:

- 1) Increase households (HHs) abilities to access food
- 2) Improve ability of HHs to adequately utilize that food
- 3) Increase HH and community resiliency to shocks that may exacerbate food insecurity

Both the CARE and SC DAPs include a significant direct distribution component while simultaneously utilizing monetization to meet the needs of cash for work developmental activities.

B. PROSPECTIVE PROGRAM STRATEGIES

Although Bangladesh appears to be approaching aggregate national cereals self-sufficiency, an estimated 30 million plus people cannot afford a daily intake of more than 1800 kilocalories. Due to the frequency of disasters, primarily annual flooding and occasional cyclones typically accompanied by high tidal surges, people in many rural areas remain ultra poor and are trapped by their poverty. Related contributing factors include the lack of reliable and regular income sources, with the majority of the rural population landless and reliant upon income from unpredictable employment. Insignificant economic activity in most areas further contributes to poverty and thereby affects community livelihoods and food security. The domain of vulnerability in this group encompasses exposure to risks, uncertainties, hazards, shocks and stresses, difficulty in coping with contingencies, and access to assets.

The recent vulnerability assessment conducted jointly by World Food Program and the GOB considered 10 key indicators covering all of the four elements of food security. A relative food insecurity map was developed based on these indicators which identified very high, high, moderate, and low areas of food insecurity. The recently approved DAPs for CARE and SC have considered this map for selection of their respective program areas. To avoid overlapping of these two DAP program areas and to further expand coverage to the most food-insecure population, the Mission encourages new proposals

which target the very high food-insecure areas excluding the CARE and SC program areas.

The goal of the Mission's Title II Programs in Bangladesh is to improve the food insecurity status of poor and vulnerable households and to mitigate the risks and uncertainties associated with their livelihoods. Future Title II programs, in order to be considered, will need to address the food insecurity and vulnerability of people within the above designated geographic areas.

Activities proposed in new DAPs should be in conformity with Bangladesh government and multilateral food security assessments and strategies. Conformance with both the Agency's (see the 1995 Food Security Policy paper) and the USAID Mission's (see the USAID/Bangladesh webpage at www.usaid.gov/bd) food security strategy and related development priorities is highly desirable, as program and resource integration is an Agency-wide goal. It is recognized that no proposal may be disapproved solely because it is not in such conformance with the latter. The Mission plans to make available a portion of its future development assistance (DA) resources to support food security activities where Title II programs directly complement its development program.

The DCHA/FFP policy is to encourage an appropriate mix of direct distribution and monetization activities. The Bangladesh Mission is encouraging proposals which rely less on monetization to sustain proposed program interventions. Proposals to implement Title II programs in Bangladesh may reflect a combination of direct distribution, cash for work, and monetized program elements. Activities should be implemented in geographic areas where food insecurity is acute, where interventions can be expected to have a significant economic impact, and where other Title II DAPs are not being implemented.

Overcoming food insecurity requires attention to specific factors that promote food availability (e.g. agricultural production diversification and productivity-enhancing technology adoption, food processing and storage, infrastructure, market), food access (income diversity, prices, employment creation, control of assets and resources), food utilization (health care, clean water, sanitation, and nutritious diets) and reducing risk (improve coping mechanism, better risk management, adequate disaster shelters, household and community focused flood-proofed facilities development). Given the relative recent success of Bangladesh in achieving national cereals self sufficiency, the Bangladesh Mission encourages DAPs which focus more on the food security components of access, utilization and risk.

C. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS/REQUIREMENTS IN PROGRAMMING

- 1 Development Assistance Program proposal submissions must follow the final FY 2006 P.L 480 Title II DAP Proposal Guidelines as issued by DCHA/FFP.
- 2 The proposal must be consistent with, and reflective of, the USAID food security strategy set forth in the 1995 USAID Food Security Policy Paper.
- 3 A Host Country Food for Peace Agreement is required. Regulation 211.3

- stipulates the requirement of Host Country Food for Peace Program Agreement. This agreement establishes the terms and conditions needed by a non-governmental CS to conduct a Title II program in the host country in accordance with the applicable requirements of Regulation 211. Express reference to, and incorporation of, Regulation 211 is required in the Host Country Agreement.
- 4 The proposal shall include direct distribution commodity component(s).
 - 5 The Mission encourages monetization through private channels rather than the existing procedure through the government. Experience has shown that monetization through the Government of Bangladesh is a lengthy, time consuming, and often frustrating process which hinders the timely transfer of sales proceeds to project accounts. The two new DAPs (FY05-09) will pilot monetizations through private channel.
 - 6 In countries where multiple DAPs are anticipated, joint monetization by cooperating sponsors is encouraged to minimize workload and accrue program efficiencies.
 - 7 The Mission encourages the programming of value-added commodities. The DCHA/FFP policy encourages programs to utilize value-added commodities. Wherever feasible, monetization of value-added commodities is preferable to the monetization of bulk commodities.
 - 8 The proposed DAP commodities must comply with a positive Bellmon analysis and be acceptable to the program beneficiaries.
 - 9 Each DAP should include a disaster management component which would include the capacity building of local NGOs, governmental bodies and local communities for combating risks hindering the attainment of household food security.
 - 10 The Bangladesh Mission believes that PVO cost sharing is an important element and demonstrates a partner's commitment to the program in Bangladesh. USAID expects applicants to demonstrate a commitment to program success by proposing an appropriate and reasonable amount of cost sharing.
 - 11 Effective partnering can increase efficiency and effectiveness, scale of coverage, transparency, sustainability of service delivery, and programming scope. Partnering with other organizations such as local NGOs, GOB Ministries, research institutions, governmental bodies and universities expands community participation, ownership and control and improves the development process. Therefore, partnering with local indigenous NGOs, local elected bodies, and relevant government agencies is strongly encouraged.
 - 12 Promoting stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of the program activities is encouraged. Use of Participatory Learning and Action techniques are important to bring together residents and leaders from the community, government officials, representatives of local entities, local NGOs to

- expand stakeholder participation, foster ownership, promote long-term maintenance assurances, and promote sustainability.
- 13 The proposal must reflect gender considerations in all activities. In recognition of the relative imbalance of women vis-à-vis men in economic and social arenas, wage disparities, and widely variable degree and scope of economic and social independence, the DAPs should make special efforts to ensure that women are given equal or optimum opportunity as program participants and beneficiaries in all activities. CSs must work closely with their partners, prospective stakeholders and beneficiaries to fully demonstrate in their proposals that all activities take into consideration the prospective impact of their respective interventions in a gender-accountable manner. Full, equitable, and appropriate participation, training and empowerment of women and men must be apparent throughout all program elements of the DAP. Gender sensitivity in staffing, training and decision making is to be given emphasis throughout the proposal.
 - 14 The Bangladesh Mission believes that a thorough gender analysis (A tool to assist the strengthening of development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in order to make programs and projects more efficient and relevant) as part of the DAP proposal is a crucial element and demonstrates a partner's commitment to mainstreaming gender in the food security program in Bangladesh. *See Annex-1, for more about gender analysis*
 - 15 The Title II program should be designed to help achieve the Mission's goal of improving the food security of the most vulnerable groups. The geographic strategy used in programming should allow for the targeting of the most vulnerable beneficiary groups.
 - 16 Appropriate food utilization is critical to the achievement of improved food security in Bangladesh. The direct food distribution component(s) of the DAP should reflect a balanced diet package as opposed to the sole distribution of food grains.
 - 17 Linkages with other USAID funded projects and partners are strongly encouraged.
 - 18 USAID/Bangladesh envisions future DAP(s) with a well-defined programmatic and geographic focus.

D. REFERENCE SOURCES

The "DCHA/FFP "P.L. 480 Title II Guidelines for Development Assistance Programs" may be obtained from the USAID/DCHA/FFP Website at:

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/ffp/nonemergency.html

A description of the USAID Bangladesh Mission activities can be obtained from USAID/Bangladesh website: <http://www.usaid.gov/bd> or may be found at the Asia Near East website at: http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/

Annex – 1

Gender Analysis

Gender analysis refers to the variety of methods used to understand the roles of and relationships between men and women, their access to and control over resources, their activities, decision-making opportunities, and the constraints they face relative to each other. Gender analysis provides information that recognizes that gender, and its relationship with race, ethnicity, culture, class, community, social and family organization, landholding pattern, education, skills, income, religion, regional grouping, age, disability, and/or other status, is important in understanding the different patterns of involvement, behavior and activities that women and men have in economic, social and legal structures. Gender analysis is an essential element of socio-economic analysis. A comprehensive socio-economic analysis would take into account gender relations, as gender is a factor in all social and economic relations. An analysis of gender relations provides information on the different conditions women and men face, and the different effects that policies and programs may have on them because of their situations. At the local level, gender analysis makes visible the varied roles women, men, girls and boys play in the family, in the community, and in economic, legal and political structures. A gender perspective focuses on the reasons for the current gender division of labor, tasks, responsibilities and benefits and their effect on the distribution of rewards and incentives. Who are the intended recipients of the benefits of the proposed intervention, program or project, and who could potentially lose? Are women and men involved or affected differently by the context or in the proposed interventions to be undertaken? If so, is this difference potentially significant for sustainable program impact? How will these concerns be addressed?

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