

**JOINT EVALUATION OF
EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF THE
ENABLING DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF THE
WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)**



**BANGLADESH
COUNTRY STUDY**

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JOINT EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF THE ENABLING DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF THE WFP

BANGLADESH COUNTRY STUDY



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VOLUME I: MAIN TEXT

VOLUME II: (on CD Rom)

ANNEXES:

- 1 - Work plan
- 2 - Partnerships in project implementation
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|--|
| ADP | Annual Development Programme |
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| ASOD | Assistance for Social Organisation & Development (NGO) |
| BBS | Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics |
| BCM | Beneficiaries Contact Monitoring |
| BDF | Bangladesh Development Forum |
| BDSC | Bangladesh Development Service Centre |
| BMI | Body Mass Index |
| BRAC | Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (NGO) |
| BWDB | Bangladesh Water Development Board |
| CBO | Community-based organisation |
| CCA | Common Country Assessment |
| CCF | Common Country Framework |
| CHT | Chittagong Hill Tracts Rural Development |
| CNI | Community Nutrition Initiative |
| CO | Country Office |
| CP | Country Programme |
| CSO | Country Strategy Outline |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DHS | Directorate of Health Services |
| DOF | Department of Fisheries |
| DRR | Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation |
| DRRO | District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer |
| DWA | Department of Women Affairs |
| DWAO | District Women Affairs Officer |
| EC | European Commission |
| ECW | Enhanced Commitment to Women |
| EDP | Enabling Development Policy |
| EMOP | Emergency Operation |
| ERD | Economic Relations Division (Ministry of Finance) |
| EU | European Union |
| FAAD | Food Aid and Development |
| FFA | Food for Asset Creation |
| FFE | Food for Education |
| FFS | Food for Schooling |
| FFW | Food for Work |
| FSAC | Food Security Assistance Committee |
| FVGD | Food Security for Vulnerable Group Development |
| GCCR | Growth Centre Connecting Roads |
| GLEW | Group Leader Extension Workers |
| GoB | Government of Bangladesh |
| GPS | Government Primary School |
| GUK | Gram Unnayan Kendra Balabarihad (NGO), Kurigram |
| HEB | High Energy Biscuit |
| HIES | Household Income and Expenditure Survey |
| HIV | Human Immune-Deficiency Virus |
| HPWDP | Hardcore Poor Women's Development Programme |
| HYV | High Yielding Variety |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| IFADEP | Integrated Food-assisted Development Project (EC) |
| IFPRI | International Food Policy Research Institute |
| IFS | Integrated Food Security |
| IGA | Income generating Activity |
| IGVGD | Income Generation for Vulnerable Group Development |
| IP | Implementing Partner |
| I-PRSP | Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper/Process |
| JC | Jagaroni Chakra (NGO), Jessore |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |
| LCG | Local Consultative Group |
| Lean Season | Dry season, March – April |
| LGD | Local Government Division |
| LGED | Local Government Engineering Department |
| LTSH | Landside Transportation, Storage and Handling |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| MDMR | Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief |
| MEF | Ministry of Environment and Forest |
| MFL | Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock |
| MFU | Milling and Fabrication Unit |
| MIS | Management Information System |
| MLGRDC | Ministry for Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives |
| MoF | Ministry of Food |
| MoHF | Ministry of Health and Family Welfare |
| MoPME | Ministry of Primary and Mass Education |
| MT | Metric Ton |
| MWCA | Ministry of Women and Children Affairs |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organisation |
| NNP | National Nutrition Project |
| PIC | Programme/Project Implementation Committee |
| PIP | Project Implementation Plan |
| POP | Population (and Health) Project (IBRD) |
| PRA | Participatory Rural Appraisal |
| PRRO | Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper/Process |
| RASDO | Rural Advancement Social Development Organisation (NGO) |
| RBM | Results based Monitoring |
| RD | Rural Development |
| RDRS | Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (NGO) |
| RMP | Routine Maintenance Programme |
| RO | Regional Office |
| SAA | Situational Assessment and Analysis |
| SC | Steering Committee |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| SFP | School Feeding Programme |
| SMC | School Management Committee |
| Tk | Taka (local currency) |
| TMSS | Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (NGO) |
| TNC | Training and Nutrition Centre |
| UNAIDS | UN Programme on HIV/Aids |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework |

| | |
|--------|--|
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNJSMI | UN Joint Safe Motherhood Initiative |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UP | Union Parishad |
| UPVGD | Union Parishad Vulnerable Group Development |
| UWAO | Upazilla Women Affairs Officer |
| VAM | Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping |
| VGD | Vulnerable Group Development |
| VGf | Vulnerable Group Feeding |
| VNP | Village Nutrition Promoter |
| WTC | Women's Training Centre |

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Bangladesh Country Report is one of the seven country studies which constitute the core of a comprehensive evaluation of the World Food Programme's (WFP) Enabling Development Policy (EDP)¹, launched in 2003 by a consortium of donors. The evaluation has a three-phase structure: a desk phase, completed in March 2004; a field phase that includes a total of seven country studies undertaken between the months of March and July 2004; and a Synthesis phase due for completion by the end of 2004.
2. The Bangladesh case study involved field visits to projects supported by WFP under its Food Aid and Development Programme (FAAD), in addition to interviews and interactions with representatives from the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), donor agencies, NGOs, target beneficiaries and other stakeholders at different levels. The mission visited three regions (Northwest, Central and Southwest), involving four districts in the Rajshahi Division (Bogra, Gaibandha, Rangpur and Kurigram), one district in Dhaka Division (Tangail), and three districts in Khulna Division (Satkhira, Jessore and Kustia).
3. The study largely follows the methodology developed during the desk phase and first implemented in a pilot study (in Ethiopia): four main questions (or topics) and a related "Evaluation Matrix" with sub-questions, indicators, data collection methods and recommended sources of information constituted the main framework of analysis to guide the evaluation team throughout the evaluation process and make the country studies uniformly structured and directly comparable. As in the case of Ethiopia, the study on Bangladesh has adopted the questionnaires and guidelines for data collection and information.
4. **Country Programmes (CP) are vehicles for the provision of WFP's development assistance.** At present the WFP Country Programme (CP) portfolio includes the following four projects:
 - Vulnerable Group Development (VGD): 48% of the portfolio;
 - Rural Development (RD): 37% of the portfolio; activities were initially stopped countrywide and partially integrated into the IFS Project, but resumed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 2002;
 - Integrated Food Security Projects (IFS): 4% of the portfolio;
 - School Feeding Programme (SFP): 1% of the portfolio;
 - In addition to these, preventive measures against HIV/AIDS (awareness building, advocacy, assistance and the need for cooperation) are being integrated into the CP's basic activities.
5. **Bangladesh stands out among WFP partner countries** due to frequent and severe natural disasters (especially flooding). In the country, any attempts at comprehensive, particularly development-oriented assistance with expected lasting impacts face frequent setbacks and loss of the accumulated capital and physical resources. In this context, **investing in human capital rather than in the creation of material assets** has become a more logical and promising approach. It is in this field that WFP's development-oriented programmes have gained reputation and greater impact. The approach of **using food aid as a catalyst for socio-economic development** (encourage investment and the creation of lasting assets, build awareness at grassroots level and influence the livelihoods of poor, food insecure households) is largely undisputed and well reflected in practice.
6. As for the **introduction of the EDP as a guideline for programming**, a majority of the EDP's strategic objectives have been incorporated in the current CP activities (in WFP activities with a longer history, certain FAAD aspects and components had already evolved in project practice). Among these are: (i) mainstreaming of food aid interventions into wider contexts of

¹ Referred to within WFP as Food Aid and Development (FAAD).

development, (ii) site-specific and participatory targeting routines, and (iii) enhanced monitoring, which is increasingly focused on results and medium and long-term impact.

7. **The CP reflects well the relevant international and national policy background.** It is relevant to the Millennium Development Goals and UNDAF priorities and relates back to the Government of Bangladesh's (GoB's) objectives and development priorities (e.g. the Five Year Plan and the National Nutrition Programme), thereby fostering a high degree of ownership. Measures built on a longstanding partnership with the GoB, by and large, are acceptable, with minor discrepancies concerning the extent of food versus cash to be provided to the beneficiaries. The GoB's significant contributions to WFP interventions illustrate the **remarkably high level of country-ownership** that has been established. This is a positive asset in achieving WFP goals.

8. Findings indicate that the **CP is coherent with other donors' development strategies**, and thus constitutes an enabling framework for donor co-ordination. Strategic partnerships are well institutionalised, especially cooperation with UN agencies. WFP is partner to relevant horizontal as well as vertical networks. A Local Consultative Group is the main forum to maintain partnerships with bi- and multilateral agencies. Practical outcomes, with regard to every-day co-ordination of activities and cost-sharing arrangements, need improvement.

9. Bangladesh offers a quite prominent **example of functioning partnerships in project implementation, which have increased with the adoption of the EDP.** Major partnerships include international/regional/national NGOs, national as well as decentralised sector administrations, etc. Partnerships with NGOs are particularly varied and cover a great part of the project cycle.

10. Manifest improvements of the national policy and legal framework notwithstanding, gender equity has not yet been fully achieved. Bangladeshi women still lack equal access to educational services. Likewise, they are denied equal opportunities in terms of (social) mobility, and legal protection. WFP interventions need to focus more closely on gender-equity issues, particularly by means of awareness raising and sensitisation of men in society, e.g. through training of trainers.

11. **The 2001-2005 Country Programme applies systematic and integrated programming, planning, and monitoring of interventions, assigning food aid to a functionally subordinate, complementary role within a wider development policy rationale.** This notion has been conceived through a decade-long, continuous process of negotiations between GoB and the donor community. It is in line with one of the cornerstones of the EDP, which entails, inter alia, (i) mainstreaming of food aid interventions into wider contexts of development, (ii) site-specific and participatory targeting routines, and (iii) enhanced monitoring², which is increasingly focused on results, medium and long-term impact. Enhanced monitoring routines require dissemination, training, and specific capacity building, especially among WFP implementing partners (such as NGOs involved at local level). To this end, a special RBM unit has been established at the country office, and a handbook published. A higher degree of transparency will be achieved through the forthcoming publication of monthly reports.

12. One further aspect of integration is linking food aid to ongoing EMOP/PRRO interventions. In practice, integration of food aid interventions into a wider development context translates into

² Monitoring Checklists and Reports for different activities are considered very informative and useful tools. Their scope should be expanded. In particular, the Questionnaires for monitoring 2004 ECW Implementation: Food for Training (FFT) and 2004 ECW Design Self-Assessment: Food for Work (FFW), Nutrition, Relief/General Food Distribution (GFD) will help to bridge gaps of information and complement the general picture of impacts and outcome of food assistance in Bangladesh. Further monitoring tools include longitudinal surveys and Participatory Learning Exercises.

a more focused implementation³. There is a need to define clear exit-strategies – lest partial withdrawal leads to gaps and a lack of sustainability.

13. Development-oriented measures such as the WFP's CP should have suitable interfaces to (previous or potential future) emergency operations so as to ensure time saving, efficient action. The CP's tendency towards integrated approaches meets this requirement. An example of the structural limits of integrating relief in development may be observed in the exclusion of the elderly and disabled poor from Vulnerable Group Development projects.

14. **Relevance of WFP interventions is diminished to some extent by procedural restrictions.** VGD selection criteria create structural disparities for the elderly as well as juvenile women, and tend to exclude the physically weak or disabled. Likewise, the past shift of focus, away from large-scale FFW interventions, restricts WFP capacity to assist society's most vulnerable groups.

15. **Targeting based upon spatial information (the GoB-endorsed Vulnerability Information and Mapping System approach) has become an integral part of the CP and a model for other donors.** It has led to a satisfactory identification of vulnerable groups – in this case mostly women and children - and provides a precondition for more effective and efficient use of food aid resources. Targeting is characterised by a high degree of stakeholder participation: CBO and (local) NGOs are involved in the identification of beneficiaries. Their results are fed into the stepwise targeting process.

16. While initially CP assistance was conceived to be limited to highly food insecure areas only, 25% of the resources available to WFP within the frame of the "Vulnerable Group Development" project are now allocated to *moderately food insecure areas*. The reason was the effort by WFP and the GoB to counter certain inevitable imbalances of area-based targeting – i.e. the fact that isolated needy target groups can also be found in areas that are better off overall. This **change in the strategic allocation of resources** indicates that while targeting already functions very well, it is still conceived flexibly enough for adjustments.

17. However, **targeting procedures may trigger unintended side effects.** VAM procedures risk bypassing small, isolated poor communities because they are systematically geared towards the most vulnerable parts of the country. Furthermore, VAM does not yet allow for adequate consideration of inequity with regard to land resources and natural resource tenure.

18. Yet, if the food quantities available to WFP were reduced again, the WFP strategy could be changed from targeting a few beneficiaries in many places to targeting many beneficiaries in a few places, provided the GoB approves a switching from its policy of geographic coverage. In any case, shortening the period of beneficiaries' participation in project activities should be avoided.

19. **WFP interventions are generally successful in achieving their goals.** The EDP has achieved measurable success in various respects: asset creation, introduction of income generating activities, increased enrolment⁴, women's graduation into NGOs' mainstream activities and NGO membership, access to micro-credit, skills development and access to initiatives such as savings and insurances. These are considered vital by the WFP programme participants for sustained livelihoods.

20. A clear perception of tangible advantages (in terms of income, improved livelihoods, etc.) on part of the target groups is considered a major determining factor for success.

21. **On the other hand, the overall effectiveness of WFP interventions is restricted by a lack of management capacities on the national partners' part.** Promising implementation

³ Rural Development projects were reduced and partly incorporated into the Integrated Food Security budget line. WFP's development-oriented operations increasingly focus on empowerment and human resources development for improving livelihoods, whereas assistance to great infrastructure projects has been abandoned.

⁴ cf. the increase in attendance in WFP-assisted schools from 69% in 2001 to 90% in the last quarter of 2003.

partnerships notwithstanding, many **national authorities' management capacities and accountability are still lacking**. Unless management capacities can be significantly improved, this will remain a bottleneck for development cooperation in a general sense.

22. **Access to land resources remains a crucial issue.** Despite the EDP commitment to sustainable livelihoods, many households' food security situation is threatened by the continuing degradation of natural (land) resources. Apart from recurring natural disasters, this problem is directly induced by poverty. Bangladesh is characterised by an extreme scarcity of land, nearly all of which is already under intensive cultivation, industry, rural/ urban settlement and infrastructure. Population growth forces agriculture to bring marginal areas and wetlands under cultivation. Most ultra-poor participants in the WFP supported programme will hardly be able to obtain access to any land, be it degraded or not.

23. **A definite conclusion on the efficiency of EDP related WFP activities would need to be based on crosschecks and more extensive investigations.** It would entail access to a significant number of projects of the same type, making it possible to draw representative comparisons, which was not feasible in the scope of the mission. By any means, the synergies created by WFP's activities (such as VGD's collaboration with the National Nutrition Programme) should be monitored and one should debate as to whether similar lines of cooperation could be established with other programmes.

24. WFP has involved counterparts in monitoring; consultants are present to solve problems. As comprehensive impact monitoring is in the state of inception, success of implementation cannot be reliably gauged just yet, and bottlenecks may still occur.

25. In **demonstrating results**, a prior focus on quantitative outputs – although practiced extensively and painstakingly – has given way to a more comprehensive understanding, with qualitative results and impacts being increasingly considered. Stakeholders have switched or are switching to Results-Based Monitoring (RBM). In the CO a special unit was established. WFP adopted guidelines for the planning and the implementation of EDP related projects, which have been shared with partners cooperating with the WFP. These guidelines have been drafted in close cooperation with the GoB and the donor community, which in fact assures a high level of acceptance.

26. The **turn towards qualitative results and impacts** will need continued emphasis. It should promote the process of adapting and fine-tuning indicators. Collecting baseline data (on nutrition/health/care behaviour and social empowerment) at the beginning of activities is vital to evaluate the impacts of poor and ultra poor women at a later stage. In particular, medium and long-term monitoring of the effects of income generating activities will be needed to assess their success and impacts and to make potentially necessary adaptations.

27. **Results based monitoring calls for further improvement.** As yet, available data do not allow country-wide monitoring, and comparison of quantitative findings. However, available monitoring tools remain particularly weak in respect of qualitative assessments. While this problem does not necessarily restrict simple output-to-purpose reviews, it certainly impedes more advanced impact assessments.

28. **Sustainability of measures remains a critical issue, and clearly warrants closer attention.** For this, income generation provides an exemplary case. Whereas WFP assisted beneficiaries have been found to gain self-confidence through their entrepreneurial activities, they may not always be able to save enough assets for creating a secure livelihood. Training in income generating activities is limited to a number of specialised fields. Sometimes it is not sufficiently professional, or does not take in account the actual markets in which the beneficiaries mean to perform their new activity. **Training of trainers would be worth investing in.** Extension advice from various government departments, which are better equipped in terms of knowledge and skills, could be a measure of choice.

29. In **income generation**, further bottlenecks are a) the availability of places with NGOs into which participants can graduate, and b) the actual volume of job opportunities/the market capacity for ‘graduates’ in rural food insecure areas. National job opportunity schemes might be able to assist measures in this respect but are currently not provided for.

30. Beneficiaries’ uncertainty about future opportunities, as was observed in some projects, may be due to some NGOs’ reluctance to promise people’s integration into their mainstream activities in the face of a demand higher than what can be met. A similar gap may arise in schools where an ever rising number of enrolled pupils is confronted with teaching staff who cannot be that easily expanded, especially in rural areas. Coping strategies have not yet been identified.

31. Sustainability of WFP interventions is further restricted by a certain **lack of transparency** on the part of the participating NGOs. For a substantial number of target group members, the odds of successful “graduation” to full NGO membership, and the economic prospects associated with their active involvement, remain largely unclear. Many participants cannot predict how reliable NGO support will remain in the future.

32. Sustainability of WFP interventions continues to be threatened also by Bangladesh’s **failing economic progress**. Without substantial economic recovery, manifest achievements of WFP might evaporate in the foreseeable future. At the same time, functioning exit policies (which yet have to be developed) will become less likely. If macro-institutional arrangements to promote WFP’s EDP related activities do not continue as they did in the past, sustainability of WFP’s achievements is put at risk.

33. **At the time of the study, clearly defined exit strategies could not be identified at the Government, WFP or NGO levels.** Although there are numerous constraints in planning exit strategies (relating to the EDP’s focus and the country’s proneness to disasters), such strategies will be essential for long-term achievements, creation of ownership of the EDP concept at national level, and for aid co-ordination during and after project life.

34. **Participatory approaches in implementation, one of the cornerstones of the EDP, meet with high consent from project staff as well as target groups.** The field survey confirmed that actual results are coherent with the EDP. There are high levels of ownership and acknowledgement of WFP achievements at all levels, including target groups, implementation partners (both public and civil society), and other donors. Projects are highly independent in planning, managing, monitoring, and rendering accounts.

35. It has been found, however, that **there is a price to be paid for participation**, as funding for staff and training in PRA methods, process monitoring and reporting, food handling and distribution are needed. Target groups require information and capacity-building to participate. In addition, to be mainstreamed into regular NGO activities, they need a clear and convincing vision of future development opportunities, and a realistic understanding of risks (investments, micro-credits, market capacities, etc.).

36. **Gender mainstreaming**, a major prerequisite within the EDP framework, is well reflected in current WFP interventions. While awareness training increases women’s knowledge base and makes them socially aware, it should be remembered that many social issues are not thoroughly under women’s control, such as the giving or taking of dowry, or child marriage. Including male partners in awareness raising activities, which is currently debated, seems a necessary means to achieve long-term changes in social behaviour. The problematic context for women’s achievement and integration requires addressing measures to reduce insecurity and social violence towards women and supporting employment oriented growth strategies, which are beyond the scope of the CP and require a political solution.

37. An **HIV** prevalence of under 0.2 % (2003) among the 15 to 49 age group fosters a widespread neglect of the HIV problem in Bangladesh’s society. With numbers expected to increase significantly in the near future, the WFP has embarked on **preventive awareness**

raising. First public relations activities and the establishment of assistance groups are underway. HIV/AIDS is being mainstreamed in training curricula and activities.

38. **As regards the general option of food aid versus cash, female beneficiaries clearly preferred food aid, as it would be more difficult for them to retain control over cash.** Many donors seem reluctant to supply cash instead of food grain. Some donor countries producing grain surpluses still prefer to supply food in kind instead of cash for WFP to use in its development programme.

39. Given the extent of **children's malnutrition**, and its consequences for education and girls' livelihoods, food is an indispensable key to development for this target group. Besides enabling them to meet their special nutritional and nutrition related needs, children and expecting and nursing mothers were felt to deserve more attention in the CP – e.g. integration of de-worming treatment for young children, and monitoring of volume and impact of activities related to these target groups.

40. Whether **local purchases of wheat** would be cheaper than wheat imports could not be assessed definitely: local authorities assume a lower supply gap than international organisations (their calculations are based on the actual per-capita consumption and respective projections, while WFP holds that the actual need exceeds consumption, referring to the apparent malnutrition of citizens). Anyway, given the local market characteristics - local supplies are neither reliable nor readily available in the necessary nutritional composition - comparing cost would not offer a sound basis for decisions, in favour of either imported or local food grain.

41. Similarly, the question of potentially spoilt local markets as a result of imports may seem academic as long as the country is not able to cope without imported food. The mission's requests at the Directorate General for Food in the Ministry for Relief and Disaster Management yielded a firm dismissal of the notion that food grain imports would negatively influence the national grain market. It seems vital that WFP (and other donors) and the GoB agree on a uniform approach to assessing the degree of food availability and future food requirements in the country.

42. **WFP's resources for food aid for development have decreased substantially since 1998**, restricting WFP's room for manoeuvre and making it impossible to extend the CP's scope. Transition from the first to the second CP alone was marked by a 52% reduction in funds. This increasingly obliges WFP to concentrate its interventions geographically and build its activities on existing operations. Large projects (e.g. infrastructure) were dismissed in favour of smaller ones.

43. In this context it is unlikely that allegedly too narrow selection criteria (concentration on highly food insecure areas, limitation of activities to women of childbearing age), or a seemingly undue limitation of services (e.g. credit volume too small or duration too short) will be modified. **Projects of the "Integrated Food Security" activity have suffered appreciably from the cuts in resources.** Here, resource constraints could ultimately put long-term sustainability at risk.⁵ The observed reduction in foreign assistance seems to be mostly due to worldwide economic recession, rather than disagreements about strategic objectives of the donors concerned. Yet, WFP may have to further adapt its strategies to decreasing resources. Maintenance should be given preference over new investments.

44. **Project-level activities were characterised by comparatively good performance.** Field surveys, consultations and observations revealed that food was always delivered in time, even during floods. Allusions, in literature, that in some cases the quantities distributed did not correspond to what had been assured, could not be verified in the field. Bottlenecks occur in monitoring, for instance when project staff lack non-food items such as means of transport.

⁵ For example with the modest short-term credits that cover a relatively small period of time, WFP-assisted beneficiaries are not always able to save enough assets to secure their future livelihoods.

45. As regards Vulnerable Group Development (**VGD**), the evaluation revealed significant improvements of the livelihood quality and socio-economic status of target women, but also of their social status, self-representation and decision-making capacity. Their future success in NGO activities or as self-employed entrepreneurs seemed to depend greatly on their being informed in an adequate and timely manner, and to some degree on the diversification of training and income generating measures.

46. In Integrated Food Security (**IFS**) the previous piloting of new approaches and methodologies on a small scale and close monitoring paid off in a well-fashioned concept. IFS has shown positive results in the training of beneficiaries and trainers in awareness-raising (health, sanitation, family planning, food and nutrition, legal rights), functional literacy, and basic numeracy. Resource constraints and unpredictability of resources seriously hamper the implementation process. Only 33 % of the target has been reached so far.

47. The School Feeding Programme (**SFP**), although making up just 1% of the portfolio, has proved that food aid can yield increased enrolment (increase in gross primary enrolment ratio by 52 percent points), can improve children's nutritional status and health, and can make pupils more attentive and focused. The SFP also brought about reduced gender disparities in primary education: in 2000, female net enrolment reached nearly 83%, narrowly exceeding that of males. Of course, school feeding as such can do little for the quality and practical relevance of the education offered in rural areas. SFP support contributes to, but cannot provide a solution for, improving the education of the rural poor.

48. **Recommendations have been formulated on the basis of conclusions, which in turn rest on findings. Recommendations thus mark the end of a "chain of reasoning".** Recommendations, of necessity, relate to the identified weaknesses alone, and avoid repetitious listing of the WFP's numerous merits and successes. For this reason, and with a view to avoiding false and distorted judgements of WFP interventions in Bangladesh, readers are cautioned to always read the conclusions and recommendations in context. To facilitate this process, and for greater ease of reading, for each of the below recommendations the most relevant references (conclusions) have been listed by their respective paragraph-numbering (indicated in edged brackets).

49. Based upon their assessment of findings and the conclusions hence derived, the team's recommendations are as follows:

- ✓ Promote integration of WFP activities through inter-institutional networks and institutionalised collaboration routines [300]
- ✓ Develop phased exit-strategies through multi-stakeholder consultations, and define timelines and benchmarks for their implementation [286]
- ✓ Devise capacity-building strategies which target national sector administrations as well as para-statal and non-governmental service providers [298]
- ✓ Systematically review practical implementation of the VAM approach, and consider adoption of more flexible and situation-specific procedures (with a view to including moderate/low insecurity areas, as appropriate) [288, 303]
- ✓ Assess appropriateness of VGD (particularly the selection criteria) in a similar manner, so as to better accommodate the needs of the most vulnerable social strata [290, 302], including young children and expecting/nursing mothers [309]
- ✓ Enhance the participants' prospects of graduating into regular NGO activities [294]
- ✓ Enhance depth and accuracy of impact monitoring mechanisms and instruments [310]
- ✓ Investigate options for improving accuracy and timeliness of qualitative as well as quantitative data; consider integration of WFP data into existing database formats at national level (e.g. GIS based systems provided by other donors) [308].

EVALUATION OF WFP ENABLING DEVELOPMENT POLICY BANGLADESH COUNTRY STUDY

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1. On May 4, 1999, the World Food Programme Executive Board approved the EDP to help the organisation sharpen the focus of its development activities. The present external evaluation, sponsored by a number of WFP donors, assesses the efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance and sustainability of this policy. The evaluation intends to: i) provide the sponsoring donors with valuable insights and issues for consideration in relation to future support for WFP development activities; ii) identify measures and mechanisms that could potentially enhance WFP's effectiveness in the design and implementation of its development portfolio; and iii) contribute through empirical evidence to a better understanding of the conditions for success and failure of food aid in development activities. In the scoping phase, it was decided that the EDP would be evaluated mainly on the basis of the results it had generated. The assessment is carried out at global, country and local levels, with the main focus on the country and local levels.
2. The evaluation is undertaken in three phases: a **desk phase** which has been completed in March 2004, a **field phase** that included a total of seven country studies, completed by August 2004, and a **synthesis phase** completed end of October 2004. In line with the preliminary analysis of the EDP and with the evaluation's intended objectives and focus, **four main questions** (or topics) and a **related evaluation matrix** were identified during the inception phase. They are the main framework of the analysis and guide the various evaluation team members throughout the evaluation process, while keeping it focused.
3. The insights of this study were gained by the Bangladesh Country Team in consultation with representatives of WFP CO, UN agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders in Dhaka, and during project visits in April/May 2004 – only weeks before the country was struck by another major flood disaster that, within a few days, took the homes and assets of about 30 million inhabitants and led to a major food, shelter and rehabilitation crisis. Once again, this crisis underlined Bangladesh's position as a hotspot of food aid – and the significance of measures geared towards sustainable prevention and development.
4. The report is divided into four main chapters. **Chapter 1** presents the methodology employed and difficulties encountered. **Chapter 2** describes the Bangladesh context with respect to food security and food aid issues and the specific cultural and social limitations the women are facing, and outlines WFP interventions in the country. **Chapter 3** illustrates the evaluation's main findings at country level and at local and project levels. Finally, **Chapter 4** presents the country team's main conclusions and draws linkages between findings that have emerged from the various evaluation questions.

RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE COUNTRY STUDY

Basis for Country Selection

5. Seven countries were selected for this evaluation: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Honduras, Mali, Mozambique and Pakistan. The Evaluation Team's judgement – approved by the Steering Committee - was based on the following deliberations:

- the need to represent as far as possible all major socio-economic contexts in which WFP operates;

- coverage of the five areas of focus listed in the EDP policy;
 - the presence of particularly interesting activities or experiences that could be the basis for specific case studies;
 - situations where countries have adjusted their development portfolios, which may provide insights into the reasons for such changes; and
 - the availability of evaluations and other material that could facilitate the country studies.
6. Bangladesh was selected mainly because of:
- the share of the assistance of WFP to the country compared with the overall development portfolio of WFP and the number of programme participants (amounting in 2002 to over one million, of which 78% were female);
 - the importance of the other WFP operations and their potential linkages with the CP and the EDP;
 - the existence of documentation and evaluation reports concerning WFP activities;
 - the overall importance of the country inhabited by about 133 million people and subject to recurrent natural disasters as in the year of this study, with respect to the international debate on food aid and food security issues.
7. Moreover, Bangladesh hosts one of the largest WFP-assisted school feeding projects world-wide, with 144 million rations p.a. provided in food insecure rural areas and urban slums.

Objectives of the Country Study

8. In the framework of the overall evaluation the objective of the country studies is “to contribute evidence based elements to the overall evaluation process through assessment of the EDP related principles, activities and results in the specific country context”. In line with the EDP Evaluation matrix, the country studies aim to assess:

- the relevance of the EDP to the country and local contexts;
- the degree to which WFP’s delivery process at the country level has been updated to facilitate implementation of the EDP;
- the results (outputs, outcomes and impacts) of the EDP at the local and country levels;
- the degree of – or chances to achieve – sustainability of the results attained or to be attained.

Terminology Used in this Report

9. The terminology used was developed during the inception phase and agreed upon at a team leader workshop in Rome towards the end of April. For easier reference some general recurring terms are cited:

a) Emergency Operations (EMOPs):

The mechanism by which WFP, in response to a request from a government or the UN Secretary-General, provides emergency food aid and related assistance to meet the food needs of people affected by a disaster or other emergency. An EMOP, including extensions, generally lasts no more than 24 months, after which any need for continuing relief and rehabilitation/recovery assistance should normally be met through a Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation.

b) Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRROs):

The mechanism by which continuing WFP assistance is provided to emergency-affected populations, including refugees and displaced persons, when an EMOP reaches its two-year

limit, and by which developmental⁶ approaches are gradually introduced to promote recovery. PRROs are normally planned, approved and implemented in a 3-year cycle. Planning for a PRRO should begin after the first twelve months of an EMOP.

c) Development Operations:

The category of food aid programmes and projects that support economic and social development. This category includes rehabilitation and disaster preparedness projects and technical assistance to help developing countries establish or improve their own food assistance. CPs, approved by WFP Executive Board, consist of a number of specific projects, called **activities**, within a country for a set period, normally five years, to achieve a common goal. These activities are derived from the “key areas of assistance” described in a **Country Strategy Outline**.

10. The results of WFP Projects and Activities are classified according to three categories:

- a) Outputs defined as the products, capital goods and services which result from a WFP operation, include changes resulting from the operation which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes. They relate to the output level of the log-frame hierarchy.
- b) Outcomes or the medium-term results of an operation’s outputs; they relate to the purpose level of the log-frame hierarchy.
- c) Impact or the positive and negative, intended or unintended long-term results produced by a WFP operation, either directly or indirectly. This relates to the goal level of the log-frame hierarchy.
- d) Sustainability denotes the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed; the probability of continued long-term benefits; and the resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.

11. The Enabling Development Policy uses assistance with food to encourage investment and the creation of lasting assets, and uses food to influence the livelihoods of poor, food insecure households with the following objectives:

- Enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs;
- Enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and training;
- Make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets;
- Mitigate the effects of natural disasters, in areas vulnerable to recurring crises of this kind;
- Enable households which depend on degraded natural resources for their food security to make a shift to more sustainable livelihoods.

12. Finally when referring to the Enabling Development Policy, it should be noted that:

- Within WFP it is often referred to as Food Aid and Development Policy (FAAD);
- The key policy directives and basic principles referred to in this report are: i) assistance should be provided *only* when and where food consumption is inadequate for good health and productivity; ii) each and every WFP development intervention will use *assistance with food consumption to encourage investment and leave behind a lasting asset*; iii) beneficiaries of food aid and lasting assets should be *poor, food-insecure households*; iv) *geographical targeting* should be used to concentrate resources on food-insecure areas within recipient countries; v) *timeliness* will be treated as a key aspect of targeting; vi) use should be made of *clear and objective indicators* to signal when help is needed and also when it is time for phasing out; vii) greater use of

⁶ The word developmental in this report refers to the fact that the EDP recognises that WFP food assistance should play a different but unique role. This is not to promote development, but through the provision of food assistance to enable marginalised people to take part in the development process and benefit from it.

participatory approaches; viii) strengthening of *partnerships*; ix) *cost-effectiveness* in terms of the *development results* to be achieved, with M&E becoming more results-oriented;

- The five key areas of focus or policy priorities are: 1) enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs; 2) enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and learning; 3) make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets; 4) mitigate the effects of natural disasters in areas vulnerable to recurring crises; 5) enable households which depend on degraded natural resources for their food security to make a shift to more sustainable livelihoods.

Activities Undertaken

13. This report is the result of series of activities that can be divided into:

- a) a preparatory phase to study documents providing background information on the country and the respective context;
- b) a field/country phase of 23 days undertaken by a team of four consultants that included: i) briefing sessions with main stakeholders; ii) interviews at all relevant levels; iii) project visits and consultations with the beneficiaries; and iv) debriefing sessions (a list of projects visited is provided in Annex 3); and
- c) report preparation and consolidation of findings in the home-countries of the four team members (including the correction of inaccuracies through a consultation process with the WFP Country Office).

1 METHODOLOGY

1.1 KEY FEATURES OF THE METHODOLOGY

14. The Evaluation Matrix elaborated during the desk phase was the main analytical tool to elaborate interview guidelines and checklists, questionnaires and focus group⁷ discussion guides. Some points need to be highlighted:

- As regards the Evaluation Question (EQ) 1 “*How relevant is the EDP in terms of the evolving context of poverty reduction and food security?*”, it was felt that its relevance for and coherence with the WFP’s Country Programme needed to be assessed (i.e. the instrument of WFP development programming). A two-step approach to EQ1 was therefore used: i) assessment of the relevance of the CP with respect to the country context and ii) assessment of the coherence of the CP with respect to the EDP principles.
- The evaluation question (and sub-questions) on sustainability were modified to take into account DAC definitions.
- A sub-question on HIV/AIDS mainstreaming was added⁸.
- Some indicators were revised to take into account SC comments on the Phase 1 report and the findings of the Ethiopia Pilot Study.

15. To facilitate the synthesis of the seven country studies into a comprehensive Synthesis Report, the Ethiopia Country Study was taken as a general guideline. Wherever appropriate, the definitions and formulations used in that study are adopted.

16. Interviews (using checklists), reviews and analyses of relevant documents were major tools at country and local level. The Checklist of the information to be collected, the Field Visit Guide and the Guidelines for Information and Data Collection, the Questionnaire and the Evaluation Matrix, the indicated data collection methods and the proposed sources of information as conceived during the Inception Phase, were used as comprehensively as possible.⁹

17. The following groups of stakeholders were interviewed:

- **WFP staff** at country and regional level, to ascertain the progress made and difficulties encountered in promoting EDP principles at country and project levels;
- **Government representatives at national, district and upazilla¹⁰ level** in order to: i) verify the relevance and coherence of WFP interventions with respect to sector policies and, on the other hand, assess the implementation mechanisms put in place at all levels; and ii) understand WFP’s role within the overall framework of the country’s poverty reduction and development strategies;
- **UN Agencies:** The rationale for contacting UN agencies was twofold:
 - i) to improve the understanding of the role of WFP (and the potential synergies) within CCA/UNDAF; and

⁷ The data on focus groups are not gender-disaggregated. Where advisable, men and women were consulted separately.

⁸ It is to be recalled that HIV/AIDS issues were not directly addressed by the EDP since at the time of its formulation HIV/AIDS was not yet part of the International Development Agenda. Nevertheless, the team has decided to add a specific sub-question given the negative effects of HIV/AIDS on food security and the potential role that WFP could play within the national efforts to prevent (together with other implementing partners) the further spread of the virus.

⁹ As these evaluation tools have been submitted as a general annex they are not included in this report.

¹⁰ i.e communal.

- ii) to review the past, on-going and possible future partnership agreements between WFP and individual UN agencies
- **Donors:** In addition to the meeting held with the donors sponsoring the evaluation, the team met other key donors (including some with no direct partnership agreement with WFP in the country). These contacts proved very useful in providing different perspectives and points of view on the pros and cons of the use of food aid in a non-emergency context and on WFP's role in such a framework;
- **NGOs:** NGOs are direct implementation partners of WFP development operations in Bangladesh. Their knowledge of the country, especially of the food and nutrition security situation, and food aid assistance mechanisms could contribute considerably to further clarifying the context in which WFP operates. The team interviewed representatives from national NGOs operating in the districts in which WFP operates and local CBOs collaborating with WFP.

18. The collection of data was performed by **analysing available documentation and conducting interviews** addressing WFP staff, representatives of the Government of Bangladesh and of donor countries, UN organisations working in relevant fields, national and international staff of NGOs concerned with the implementation of EDP projects and programmes and beneficiaries of still operating projects and projects which were closed down.

19. The review and analyses of relevant documents (see Annex 8: Bibliography) included: i) project documents and agreements (including other WFP operations); ii) CSOs and CPs; iii) project monitoring and evaluation reports; iv) guidelines and technical notes; v) VAM analyses; vi) partnership and collaborative agreements; vii) food procurement and food markets data; viii) national statistics and reports on food security; ix) national and sector policies relevant to WFP activities; x) reports and studies of other donors and NGOs; and xi) CCA/UNDAF documents. WFP documents have been analysed mainly to study the level of application of (and coherence with) the EDP principles in WFP development programming (as well as other operations), while analysis of other documents has provided indications on the overall relevance of WFP operations (and development in particular) for the country context and development framework.

20. Results of WFP activities were examined at **global, project and community levels**. The analysis of the overall results of WFP operations is based on the available progress reports produced by WFP and implementing partners, evaluation reports and discussions with key informants (government staff, local authorities, NGOs and other donors).

21. Information gathered during project visits and interviews with beneficiaries was a key element in the independent assessment of the actual results of WFP interventions. Given the size of WFP's operations and the limited number of days at the disposal of the evaluation team, field visits aimed at providing an illustration of what actually happens at project level and cross-checking the data available in WFP documents and other reports, and the information given by different stakeholders, while at the same time trying to integrate and supplement available information on the results achieved. **The findings should be viewed as the main contribution to the overall evaluation exercise, without claiming, given the limited sample and statistical value, that they were fully representative of the results of WFP efforts in Bangladesh.** As to the methodological issues, three key points are discussed here:

22. Interviews and focus group discussions: During project visits, discussions were held with key informants and beneficiaries. Key informants contacted include: i) community leaders ii) NGO representatives and field staff operating in the project; iii) line ministry staff at upazilla, district and union level; iv) project committee members; v) teachers; vi) parent representatives and school management committees; vii) medical doctors; and viii) former Group Leader Extension Workers (GLEW).

23. The following rapid appraisal techniques were used to gather information: i) visits to the sites to collect impressions on living conditions; ii) focus group discussions; iii) individual interviews on the spot; and vi) direct observation of project outputs so as to assess the quality and use of the assets created.

24. Key information collected: A specific checklist was prepared for each of the projects visited, based on the information gathered during the preparatory phase (in Dhaka) and on the Evaluation Matrix. In line with the EDP policy directives, the following key information was collected:

- Quality and appreciation of the food delivered;
- Timeliness of food deliveries (e.g. when compared with the actual needs);
- Beneficiaries' views on the benefits created by the project;
- Beneficiaries' and key informants' views on the targeting mechanisms of the interventions;
- Beneficiaries' role in project identification and implementation.

25. The information collected, although essentially of a qualitative nature, was consolidated to allow a more systematic analysis of the findings. Finally, during the country study, briefing sessions for WFP Country Office staff and donors sponsoring the evaluation were organised. They were designed to inform the different stakeholders about the objectives and approach of the evaluation and to identify issues worth analysing that may not have emerged during the inception phase. The debriefing session served to verify and discuss the preliminary findings of the country study with the WFP Country Office staff. At district and upazilla level, briefing sessions were held to inform the local authorities and politicians on the mission's objectives and to obtain assistance in visiting the sites chosen.

26. Sites were mostly selected by WFP staff and counterparts on the basis of Evaluation Team indications. The team did not have the impression that sites were selected because of good performance but rather because they were representative of different contexts. The Team took care to include spots off the main roads and far from the district headquarters in their itinerary.¹¹

27. At the country level the study concentrates on:

- Relevance and coherence of WFP interventions
- Partnership
- Ownership by government
- Gender mainstreaming
- Demonstrating results
- Beneficiaries involvement (participation)
- Funding and staffing
- Links of the different components in the overall portfolio.

28. At the local and beneficiary level the study focuses on:

- Project outputs and outcome
- Impact of measures undertaken
- Correct quantity and quality of food delivered
- Timeliness of food delivered
- Beneficiaries' views on the benefits created by the interventions
- Beneficiaries' and key informants' views on the targeting of the interventions
- Beneficiaries' involvement (participation), as asked at country level.

¹¹ For further details on site visits (circumstances, approach) please refer to the introductory note to Annex 1.

1.2 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED AND LIMITATIONS OF THE EXERCISE

29. While the organisation of meetings and provision of information was taken over by WFP with great care, the work at *field level* faced some difficulty. Bangladesh's security situation reduced the number of days for field research. The field tour started one day later than scheduled due to countrywide general strikes. Given the size of WFP operations in the country and the number of documents to be analysed, time was a serious constraint. The Team, while trying to keep the balance between qualitative and quantitative approaches, gave priority to **qualitative analysis**.

30. Numerous project sites were to be visited in a short time. This meant that little time was available for each field visit and very little time for in-depth interviews, especially with beneficiaries. Therefore it is difficult to generalise the answers and views expressed by beneficiaries and other parties interviewed.

31. The field programme focused on projects which had already been terminated and the evaluation team had many discussions with former beneficiaries. It was felt that actual developments like the IFS which show future trends did not get enough attention. It was only possible to visit one site for each IFS component, which is too little to draw general conclusions about this new, promising type of project.

32. Although the presence of WFP CO staff during the field visits was very supportive in many ways, it may have somewhat inhibited a more open discussion with key informants and beneficiaries.

33. In many cases no formal project evaluation had ever been conducted, or no baseline reports were available. This necessarily hampered a sound empirical analysis, or at least reduced the representativeness of the field findings. Since altogether the projects could not be investigated thoroughly through eye-witness account, documents and studies collected on site or downloaded from the worldwide web were used extensively (list of references in Annex 7).

34. Secondary data sources which were consulted embraced a variety of types of documents, such as government policy documents, operational contracts between the government and WFP, documents of and about various implementing partners – national and international –, research reports, WFP annual reports, WFP progress reports, WFP contracts with partners, and operational guidelines.

35. With regard to the individual components of the CP, the CO Bangladesh has undertaken great efforts to regularly document the impact evaluations of the VGD Project and the Rural Development Project. Together with the operational guidelines and progress reports, these data form a comprehensive documentation of good quality about these two CP components. Regarding the School Feeding Project, secondary data sources seemed rather scarce. The same may be said of the IFS, which was still in the pilot phase. Here the necessary information was mainly obtained through interviews.

36. Until recently data collected and documented by international organisations and NGOs involved in food aid were mainly centred on inputs and less on outputs/impacts. Longitudinal studies are time-consuming. Even if they were recently initiated, results will not be available soon. To assess not only the number of trainees who participated in the training, but also the economic mid-term success and sustainability of IGAs, at least three years of observation are needed. Such results are not yet available at grassroots level or with headquarters of NGOs and other organisations. However, first impressions and conclusions are documented.

37. In general the CO was very cooperative in providing copies of reports to the evaluation mission and other further data not always available in the reports. Some of the research reports

available were of good quality and gave valuable recommendations for WFP-assisted projects.¹² Others are not really representative for Bangladesh, but only for a specific geographic area like the Chittagong Hill Tracts.¹³ Unfortunately one of the few nutrition surveys which were undertaken in cooperation with WFP Bangladesh belongs to the latter sort.

38. In how far food aid has contributed to a better health and nutrition status of individuals on a *national* scale is hard to quantify. First samples (e.g. in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Area) proved of little use for generalisation, due to the regional specifics of the selected areas.

39. For an in-depth assessment of unit costs of wheat delivered, the evaluation had to contend itself with estimates provided by WFP and local government officials. These, however, could not be verified, partly because WFP does not yet use a management accounting system in Bangladesh. The economic advantage of buying local wheat instead of imported wheat, for instance, is calculated by international organisations (such as WFP) and NGOs involved in food aid. But the GoB and donors such as WFP draw opposite results (both using figures collected and elaborated by them). As long as it is not possible to verify such figures and calculations, any judgements will remain subjective.

40. As some of its standard questions did not significantly relate to the case of Bangladesh (nearly all sites were near a good constructed all-weather road, market places, primary schools and health centres were nearby), the Field Visit Guide was not regularly filled in. The Focus Group Guide and the questions of the project-specific checklists were observed in the best possible way – except when a question did not relate to a specific project in a meaningful way. All answers received were documented in written form. The potential nutrition-related indicators were followed up.

41. In chapter 3.3 the validity of the findings may be diminished to some extent by the fact that two of the selected projects¹⁴ have only been operative since 2002. Also, being a “supplementary activity” under the CP, the School Feeding Project stands out somewhat from the sample of projects selected for the analysis. Yet the Team is convinced that the findings presented are sufficiently valid as well as reliable, and that the project characteristics justify the composition of the sample.

42. The team was multidisciplinary. It comprised two national (Bangladeshi) and two foreign members (Germans) including the team leader. It was gender-balanced, comprising two women and two men. The subdivision into two groups during field visits also fulfilled these criteria, which proved beneficial to the assignment.

43. Following a short-term replacement of one international consultant, who fell seriously ill, one evaluation team member arrived later than the rest of the team. In turn, her in-country stay was prolonged, which enabled her to collect further material that was felt to be missing at the time of the project visits, and to establish contacts and gather additional information with further donors (such as the EC Country Office).

¹² e.g. IFPRI: A study on food aid leakage in Bangladesh, October 2003; or the study of the Tufts University: Expectations of ‘success’ and constraints to participation among income generation for vulnerable group development women, December 2001.

¹³ Helen Keller International: Baseline survey of women in the RMP and LSI programmes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, July 2001.

¹⁴ IFS and SFP.

2 WFP INTERVENTIONS IN THE COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CONTEXT

2.1 THE COUNTRY CONTEXT

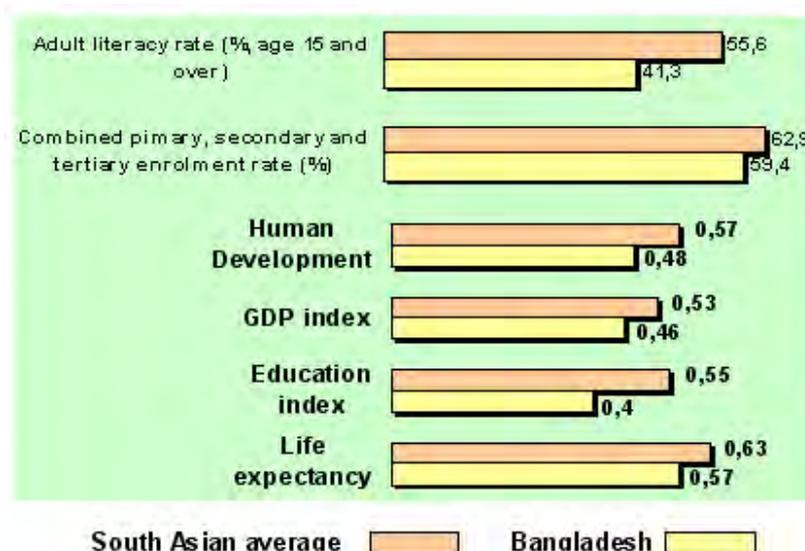
2.1.1 Socio-economic Data

Poverty

44. With 133 million inhabitants (official figures vary from 129 to 133 million) and a population growth rate of around 2%, Bangladesh is the world's eighth most populous country. The population is predicted to reach 181.4 million by 2015. Bangladesh is one of the world's poorest countries. In the Human Poverty Index (HPI-1) it holds rank 72 (latest available statistics of 2001). About 78 percent of all Bangladeshis live on US \$ 2 per day and less, of these, 29.1 % live on US \$ 1 and less. According to the UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) 2002, **forty-eight percent of the population live below Poverty Line 1** (absolute poverty according to UNDAF terminology) - which in Bangladesh is measured according to calorie intake: they are unable to meet the daily calorie requirement of 2,122 kcal/person. **Twenty percent live below Poverty Line 2** (ultra-poor, also called hard-core poor): They have a minimum daily dietary intake of less than 1,805 kcal. In human development, Bangladesh ranks 139 out of 175 (HDR 2002).

45. Figure 1 reveals that important indices for Bangladesh are below the South Asian average - e.g. the literacy rate among adults is only 41.3 (enrolment at primary, secondary and tertiary schools is 37 percent). The figure quotes the most recent figures:

Figure 1: Selected Human Development Indices: Bangladesh/South Asia



Source: Human Development Report (2002)

46. Table 1 shows the numbers and percentage of the poor from 1983/84 to 2000, in rural and urban areas, and nation-wide. In 2000, 52.5% of the urban population was below Poverty Line 1, and 25% below Poverty Line 2. The corresponding proportion for the rural population is 42% and 19%, respectively.

Table 1: Population below Poverty Line

| Year | Poverty Line: Absolute Poverty 2,122 Kcal/Day/Person | | Poverty Line 2: Hard-core Poverty 1,805 Kcal/Day/Person | |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|--|------|
| | No. in million | % | No. in million | % |
| National | | | | |
| 1983/84 | 58.4 | 62.6 | 34.3 | 36.8 |
| 1985/86 | 55.3 | 55.7 | 26.7 | 26.8 |
| 1988/89 | 49.7 | 47.8 | 29.5 | 28.4 |
| 1991/92 | 51.6 | 47.5 | 30.4 | 28.0 |
| 1995/96 | 55.3 | 47.5 | 29.2 | 25.1 |
| 2000 | 55.9 | 44.3 (2002: 48) | 25.2 | 20.0 |
| Rural | | | | |
| 1983/84 | 51.1 | 61.9 | 30.2 | 36.7 |
| 1985/86 | 47.4 | 54.7 | 22.8 | 26.3 |
| 1988/89 | 43.4 | 47.8 | 26.0 | 28.6 |
| 1991/92 | 44.8 | 47.6 | 26.6 | 28.3 |
| 1995/96 | 45.7 | 47.1 | 23.9 | 24.6 |
| 2000 | 42.6 | 42.3 | 18.8 | 18.7 |
| Urban | | | | |
| 1983/84 | 7.3 | 67.7 | 4.0 | 37.4 |
| 1985/86 | 7.9 | 62.6 | 3.9 | 30.7 |
| 1988/89 | 6.3 | 47.6 | 3.5 | 26.4 |
| 1991/92 | 6.8 | 46.7 | 3.8 | 26.3 |
| 1995/96 | 9.6 | 49.7 | 5.2 | 27.3 |
| 2000 | 13.3 | 52.5 | 6.3 | 25.0 |

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, March 2003, Report of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2000. Figures have been rounded.

47. From 1998 to 2001 woman's situation in the country has slightly improved, if one considers the upgrade from rank 121 to 112 in the Gender-related Development Index. However, socio-cultural norms about masculinity and femininity and the unequal power relations arising from them still determine women's and men's roles and responsibilities, access to productive resources and decision-making. Men are expected to be responsible for the productive activities, while women are expected to be responsible for the reproductive and productive activities within the home.

48. Along with a high level of social insecurity, women suffer from restricted mobility when seeking employment opportunities. The prevailing socio-economic environment is not conducive to women's independent economic activities. Forty-five percent of women-headed households (women who have been deserted by their husbands, who are divorced, or whose husbands are disabled) are ultra-poor (Bangladesh's average household size is 4.5 members.) While the gender gap in school attendance has somewhat decreased, it still persists, particularly at the secondary level. Poverty of opportunity is largely female.

Gross Domestic Product and Population Growth

49. The annual per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the 133 million people at market prices is US\$ 357 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, BBS 2001). The annual per-capita income was US\$ 1,602 in 2002. Table 2 shows how main economic indicators developed.

Table 2: Main Economic Indicators. Bangladesh 2000-2004 (in %)

| Item | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 (estimates) |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------------------|
| GDP growth | 5.9 | 5.3 | 4.4 | 5.2 | 5.8 |
| Gross domestic investment/GDP | 23.0 | 23.1 | 23.2 | 24.0 | 25.5 |
| Gross national savings/GDP | 22.1 | 20.8 | 23.6 | 22.7 | 23.0 |
| Inflation rate (consumer price index) | 3.4 | 1.6 | 2.4 | 3.8 | 4.5 |
| Fiscal balance/GDP | -6.2 | -6.1 | -4.4 | -3.9 | -5.2 |
| Debt service ratio | 8.0 | 8.2 | 8.7 | 8.6 | 8.4 |
| Money supply (M2) growth | 18.6 | 16.6 | 13.1 | 12.8 | 14.2 |

Source: Asian Development Bank, Asian Development, Outlook 2003, p 111.

50. The rather continuous increase of Bangladesh's GDP has not triggered a balanced distribution of wealth. The comparably high gross national savings mainly derive from the better off minority of citizens. However, with a population of 105 million in 1991, rising to 133 million in 2001, the per-capita GNP growth for Bangladesh was lowest from 1975 to 1995 compared with India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, (even if somewhat exceeding the South Asian average). Bangladesh performs worst in terms of the head-count index of income-poverty¹⁵, with 47% of the people below the Poverty Lines in the early 1990s.

51. In terms of the sector share of GDP, agriculture contributes to just over 19%, and industry 15%. Next in importance are wholesale and retail trade (13%):

Table 3: Composition of GDP (Sectoral Shares) at Constant Prices (1995/96=100 %)

| Sector | 1992/93 | 1999/2000 | 2000/2001 |
|---|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Agriculture and forestry | 23.3 | 19.5 | 19.5 |
| Mining and quarrying | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.1 |
| Industry | 13.8 | 15.4 | 15.6 |
| Electricity, gas and water supply | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| Construction | 6.0 | 7.8 | 8.1 |
| Wholesale and retail trade | 12.3 | 13.4 | 13.5 |
| Hotel and restaurant | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.6 |
| Transport, storage and communication | 9.0 | 9.2 | 9.4 |
| Financial intermediation | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| Real estate, renting, business services | 9.7 | 8.9 | 8.7 |
| Public administration and defence | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.6 |
| Education | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| Health and social services | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| Community, social/ personal services | 9.4 | 8.1 | 8.0 |

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 2001, for data 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 p. 284. (Figures are rounded.)

Impacts of Poverty

52. For many, there is a **coexistence of poverty of income, poor social indicators, vulnerable livelihoods and inadequate food consumption**. Given this poverty-livelihoods-food nexus, the national context is one of heightened vulnerability to sustainable livelihoods, food insecurity and loss of both assets and entitlements, particularly among the rural populations. In 2000, the infant mortality rate was 62 per 1000 live births, and the under-five mortality rate, 83 (Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, I-PRSP). Infant mortality is about 70 percent higher for the poorest quintile than for the richest group. The poor are more prone to illness than the non-poor and health risks constitute a major source of vulnerability.

53. Poverty is also a barrier to achieving universal primary and secondary education. Despite an impressive increase in enrolment, especially in primary schools (cf. below), dropping out remains a problem. This is due to the high opportunity cost of education for poor children, both in terms

¹⁵ The head-count index is a measure of poverty that is easy to calculate and allows poverty tracking over the years: The number of poor (those unable to meet 2,122kcal/day/person) is divided by the total population.

of forgone earnings and the necessity to engage in household work. Lack of prospective productive jobs is a further disincentive for parents to send their children to school. A general lack of awareness among the poor on issues like nutrition, hygiene, or social ills such as dowry or child marriage is to be observed throughout.

Spread and Impact of HIV/AIDS

54. Still, HIV prevalence is comparatively low with less than 0.2 % in 2003 (age groups from 15 to 49 years)¹⁶, despite the high incidence in neighbouring countries. WHO/UNAIDS estimate that there are about 13,000 infected individuals. Currently WHO/UNAIDS are trying to establish a more reliable database to obtain more accurate estimates. Among injection drug users in Central Bangladesh, the fourth round (2002) of serological surveillance has already detected an infection rate of 4% HIV - just short of the 5% mark of a concentrated epidemic¹⁷. Needle-sharing and injection drug use are expanding.

55. Among commercial sex workers, HIV infection is still under 1%. However, high risk behaviour persists. There is evidence of high risk behaviour such as pre- and extra marital sex and low condom use. The economy relies on more than 1.5 million migrant workers, including truck drivers, businessmen and labourers. The blood supply system is unsafe as blood for transfusion is not systematically screened. The stigmatising of HIV infected persons is very strong in Bangladesh, resulting in low rates of voluntary testing. As a consequence **HIV/AIDS may rapidly escalate if no preventive measures are taken**¹⁸ - a prognosis which was also shared by Bangladesh's UNAIDS representative, in conversations. There is an urgent need for action, both in awareness-raising and treatment. Prevention interventions aim at behavioural change. Their coverage, however, is considered to be still inadequate.

2.1.2 Food Security Situation (Food Gaps, Food Aid, Regional Differences, Causes of Food Insecurity, Vulnerable Groups)

Extent of Food Insecurity

56. In Bangladesh, **over 60 million people are in a situation of food insecurity**. Thirty million are considered ultra-poor/ hard-core poor. As quoted above, 48% of the population is unable to meet 2,122 kcal/day, and 20% i unable to meet 1,805 kcal/day. On the basis of the actual food intake (as demonstrated by consumption surveys) and the desired increase in intake, WFP points out that local food grain production cannot satisfy the domestic requirement.

57. The intra-household distribution of food is biased against women, who eat the last and the least. Women and girls are affected by malnutrition to a much greater extent than men and boys. The most vulnerable section is the **female-headed households**. An alarming dimension of poverty is **maternal malnutrition**. The proportion of malnourished mothers (defined by a Body Mass Index (BMI) lower than 18.5) was 45% in 1999/2000. Every second pregnant woman suffers from iron deficiency. The rural-urban gap in maternal malnutrition has increased. Maternal mortality was as high as 320 deaths per 100,000 live births between 1998 and 2001 (I-PRSP).

58. **Child malnutrition** is another problem of the poor, which affects performance in schools and later productivity in jobs. Fifty percent of all children suffer from iron deficiency. Child malnutrition is manifest in the proportion of underweight babies (DHS estimates show 48% of babies to be underweight in 1999-2000), and in the extent of stunting (height for age) and wasting (weight for age). The proportion of severely to moderately stunted children was 45% (female)

¹⁶ HDR 2003.

¹⁷ National AIDS/SD Programme, Director General Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Bangladesh 2003.

¹⁸ GoB/Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (July 2000): Strategic Plan of the National AIDS Programme of Bangladesh: p.5f.

and 10% (male) in 2000, according to the Child Nutrition Survey (CNS) statistics. In the 1-4 age group, female mortality is about one-third higher than male mortality.

Causes of Food Insecurity

59. The main cause of household food insecurity in Bangladesh is **low purchasing power**. Lack of productive employment opportunities and assets, including land, endanger household food security. Lack of employment in agriculture, especially during the lean season, is a significant problem in parts of the country, despite adoption of High Yielding Variety (HYV) and multiple cropping in many areas. As a result, a large part of the agricultural population suffers from food insecurity during the lean seasons. Agricultural labourers are the worst affected. They often sell their labour in return for credit from landowners, which results in lower wages even in the peak season.

60. As the world public was made aware again by the devastating floods at the time of the compilation of this report, Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to recurrent substantial crop losses, loss and damage to assets, homelessness and employment crises as a consequence of recurring floods. Apart from annual floods, larger floods periodically affect the country. Other natural disasters, such as cyclones, are a problem, as are droughts.

Availability of Food Grain

61. Notwithstanding the fact that food-grain production has increased since Bangladesh's independence - from 11 million tons to 26.8 million tons in 2000/01, and wheat production from 100,000 tons to nearly 1.7 million tons - the net per capita food-grain availability continuously declines with the population increase. According to WFP¹⁹ the actual net production of food grain (both rice and wheat) amounted to 23,314 million MT in 2001/2002 and to 24,027 million MT in 2002/2003. The net availability of food-grain from domestic sources reached 23.3 million MT in the financial year 2002 and created a surplus of 1 million tons over domestic consumption. Theoretically this would have made imports unnecessary, but the problem was buying capacity²⁰. In 2004, wheat production is expected to be less than 1.5 million tons, due to the prolonged drought and the reduced area under cultivation. According to the Common Country Assessment (CCA) Bangladesh, there is currently an estimated 10-15% shortfall in domestic food grain production, the deficit being met by food imports and food aid. Food aid fills 30% of the gap. The production of non-cereal foods such as fruit, vegetables, oilseeds, pulses, fish and animal products is also far below target. With the growing population, the demand for various foodstuffs will continue to grow, which again will affect prices and accessibility by the poor and vulnerable groups.

62. The WFP Country Office, discussing the question of self-sufficiency and food aid in a "Food Security Brief" in May 2002, arrived at the conclusion that:

- domestic food grain *production* was not as great as claimed by the government;
- domestic food grain *requirement* was greater than claimed by the government.

63. While the GoB claims to even produce a national surplus of food grain (still increased by net commercial imports and the off-take from national stocks), WFP estimated a food gap of 1.8 million MT for 2000/2001 (upon a basis situation that has not changed much today). The estimates of self-sufficiency in food grain (rice, wheat) differ due to different calculation approaches. **The GoB follows a supply oriented concept** (present sales and projections of such sales), WFP uses one that is **demand oriented** (assuming that the present consumption of food grain is not sufficient and a healthy daily ration of food grain would have to be considerably higher than the actual daily consumption). Despite longstanding cooperation in the area of food aid, these

¹⁹ Bangladesh Food Grain Digest, 29th February 2004, p.2.

²⁰ Asian Development Bank, Asian Development Outlook 2003, p.109.

divergent perspectives have not changed to date, which hampers any objective data based assessments.²¹

64. The **GoB**'s estimates of agricultural production are based on total food grain availability (domestic production minus seeds and losses plus net commercial imports plus/ minus stock changes). **WFP**'s estimates, on the other hand, are based on daily consumption and demand as outlined by the 2000 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) and the Nutrition Surveillance Project (NSP). Overall, WFP concluded that while the GoB's estimate of food grain requirements was too low, "the domestic supply as presented by the production figures is overestimated by approximately 11 percent". Local food grain production was not enough to satisfy the domestic requirement, and further imports of food grain would be needed in future.²²

Table 4: Estimates of Self-sufficiency in Food Grain (million MT)

| | Self- production | Food requirement | Sufficiency gap* |
|-----|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| GoB | 24.3 | 21.5 | 2.8 |
| WFP | 21.4 | 23.9 | -2.5 |

Source: WFP Bangladesh Food Security Brief, May 2002, p. 2

* Difference between the requirement and food availability net of food aid

65. In this context Bangladesh will need food aid as long as purchasing power in the country restrains the demand for private imports, and as long as greater imports by the national government are restricted by financial bottlenecks. The GoB cannot afford to make considerable payments to private providers or import sufficient quantities of foodstuff on its own account.

2.1.3 Government and Donor Priorities, Policies and Programmes Addressing Poverty and Food Insecurity

The Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme

66. For years, poverty alleviation has ranged among Bangladesh's top national goals. The country's National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development (see Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, I-PRSP) stresses **empowering the poor and achieving gender equality for poverty reduction and social development**. In the past decades, Bangladesh has made significant economic and social strides: an increase in the growth rate of per-capita income, reduction of population growth, expansion of primary and secondary education, reduction of gender inequality in education, decrease in child mortality and improvements in child nutrition, enhanced capacity for disaster management and reduction of chronic food shortage. These economic and social gains are to be consolidated, according to the I-PRSP.

67. The I-PRSP embraces the framework outlined in the Common Country Assessment (CCA)²³, and makes a commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Five sets of policies

²¹ However, the GoB's claim of food grain availability exceeding the local demand and potentially resulting allegations WFP should buy grain on local markets must be dismissed. Since the poor's **low demand for food stems from lack of purchasing power**, even supportive measures in agriculture were no remedy: Higher production would not help the landless and their consumption needs. For them, **food should be made available directly**, or employment must be generated to help purchase food. **Subsidised food prices** would not comply with free markets and would hurt marginal farmers who sell food grains. The insecurity of harvest results in Bangladesh **precludes mid-term and long-term planning of national food-grain supply**. Furthermore, the GoB's projection of the actual demand does not correspond to the actual need of food grain. If food security remains the main objective of food assistance, the actual need, which is higher than the actual demand, should count for assessing the availability of locally produced food grain for local purchases. In times of bad harvests the purchasing of grain on local markets would even lead to higher prices – and in turn cause social problems.

²² WFP, Bangladesh Food Security Brief, Dhaka, May 2002.

²³ The CCA forms the basis of the Bangladesh United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). It intends to streamline UN assistance to the country, to outline development priorities, to provide a basis for a country-level follow-up to UN conferences and to give the mandate for agencies of the UN system operating in Bangladesh (see: UN Bangladesh, The Common Country Assessment Bangladesh, Overview, Dhaka, June 2000).

are conceived for poverty reduction: (i) achieve pro-poor economic growth by increasing employment and income of the poor; (ii) foster human development of the poor by raising their capabilities through education, health, nutrition, employment oriented skill training and social interventions; (iii) promote women's advancement and close gender gaps; (iv) provide social protection to the poor against anticipated and unanticipated income/consumption shocks and vulnerabilities to disasters; and (v) enhance participatory governance and provide the poor with a greater voice. Development oriented measures already figure more prominently in the paper than relief and rehabilitation measures. Disaster management plays a significant role.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and UNDAF

68. The Government is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and, for most of them, has already set specific targets to achieve them (see overview in Annex 5).

69. The rights based approach, applied to the UN Common Country Assessment, is further deepened and refined for practical development assistance in the UNDAF 2001-2005, with a view to improving coordination and fostering synergetic and resource-effective action. The CCA indicates that on-going projects already address the full agenda of economic and social rights: interventions for building responsive governance, institutionalising human rights, improving health standards, education and skills development, sustainable food security and nutrition, and disaster-preparedness.

National Food Security Policy

70. The major priorities identified by the government for attaining food security and an adequate nutritional status in the population are to achieve self-sufficiency in food grain production at a higher level of per-capita consumption, and increase production of oilseeds, fruits, vegetable, livestock, poultry, eggs, fish and dairy products. Market mechanisms and incentive prices are to be used to encourage production. The **agricultural sector is to be modernised** through provision of extension services, training inputs and credit to farmers. Other points are increased irrigation coverage, particularly through minor irrigation projects, improved water resources management, and improved varieties of rice and wheat. The national strategy for food security also includes maintaining a buffer stock to meet emergency needs during natural disasters.

Main On-going Programmes in the Field of Food Security

71. Of the on-going programmes that concern food security the most prominent are WFP-implemented **Union Parishad Vulnerable Group Development (UPVGD)**, **Food for Asset** (Integrated Food Security Programme) and **Primary School Feeding Programme**, supported by several donor agencies. The approximate budget for each in US\$ is 6.5 million, 450,000 and 104,000 respectively. WFP's Country Programme 2001-2005 on food security and nutrition is supported by multilateral donors, bilaterals and the GoB with a budget of US\$ 58 million. Apart from this, WFP's **Protracted Relief and Rehabilitation project**, supported by multilateral donors, (US\$ 2 million), has provided food assistance to 22,000 refugees who crossed the border from Myanmar due to civil strife in 1991. USAID interventions in food security include the **Agricultural Diversification Project, Food Security in Bangladesh**, with a budget of US\$ 4.9 million, the **Integrated Food Security Programme** (US\$ 128.3 million), **Food Security Enhancement Initiative** (US\$ 89 million), **Food Insecurity Mapping** (US\$ 31 million), and **Comprehensive Food Security Data Collection** for food monitoring (US\$ 1.5 million). USAID and the GoB also support the **Integrated Food Security Programme** (US\$ 124 million) with food aid. The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Bangladesh, supports the National Nutrition Programme with US\$ 2.6 million for data collection in health and nutrition.

72. Other on-going interventions in agriculture, forestry and micro-credit also involve poor and vulnerable communities and thus indirectly enhance food security. Apart from the **Forestry Sector Project** (US\$ 92 million), supported by the Asian Development Bank, there is a **Rural Live-**

lihood Project (US\$ 74.7 million) providing micro-credit for the poor. The **Northwest Crop Diversification Project** (US\$ 66.2 million) promotes high value cash crops among small, marginal and landless farmers, and the **Chittagong Hill Tracts Rural Development** (CHT, US\$ 60.3 million) concentrates on micro-credit and income-generation. Danida supports a project in agriculture (DKK 26.2 million) that aims to improve poor farmers' nutritional status.

73. Several food security-related studies are on-going: a DFID study on farmers' participatory research on integrated rice based farming for improved livelihoods for resource-poor farm households, the USAID (and partner's) initiative **Development of the Bangladesh Country Almanac**, to support effective utilisation of natural resources for poverty alleviation and food security, and **Vulnerability Reduction for Seismic Hazards** (supported by USAID).

Education

74. The GoB and donor policies to emphasise primary and non-formal education have yielded some success in the education sector, particularly in female education.

Table 5: Number of Students by Sex in Primary Schools (in 1000)

| Year | Boys | Girls | Girls % of total | Total |
|-------------|--------|-------|------------------|--------|
| 1995 – 1996 | 9,118 | 7,950 | 46.6 | 17,068 |
| 1996 – 1997 | 9,194 | 8,125 | 46.9 | 17,319 |
| 1997 – 1998 | 9,288 | 8,341 | 47.3 | 17,629 |
| 1998 – 1999 | 10,245 | 9,367 | 42.7 | 19,612 |
| 1999 – 2000 | 9,002 | 8,376 | 48.2 | 17,378 |

Source: BBS, 2001 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 22nd edition, p. 614

75. In secondary schools girls' completion rate is still lower than that of boys. Reasons are restricted mobility of adolescent girls', girls' insecurity outside the home, and their housework chores. In terms of foregone earnings or expenditure-saving activities the opportunity cost of schooling are high for poor children of both sexes, but there is a trade-off in terms of working mothers and girls taking a greater share of the housework burden. In poor families, a popular option is for boys to work as apprentices and learn a trade, particularly in the informal sector.

76. The GoB is committed to achieving full literacy of all citizens by 2005 and to institutionalising a comprehensive, country-wide, non-formal education system. NGO participation in non-formal and formal education, which is already high, is further encouraged to this end. NGOs already implement two-thirds of the non-formal education.

77. Another national focus is on technical and vocational education, with 11 Technical Training Centres in urban industrial areas and 51 Vocational Training Institutes in small towns and semi-urban areas. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, and the Ministry of Social Welfare run vocational training programmes for women. About 100 NGOs impart non-formal vocational training for the poor.

HIV/AIDS

78. A new "**Strategic Plan of the National AIDS Programme**" for 2004-2009 is currently being developed by a task force appointed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Programme priority is the prevention of the spread of HIV. Attention is concentrated on: (i) preventing the transmission of HIV through interventions focusing on individuals with high risk behaviours; (ii) information, education and communication activities targeting policy makers as well as the general public; and (iii) enabling legislation and the use of the media, creating an enabling environment for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS including making information and care available to them.

79. WFP is presently observing how the Government addresses the problem, and it cooperates closely with UNAIDS. A specific programme activity was not yet worked out.

Country Context Main Features

- In Bangladesh over 60 million people face food insecurity. 30 million are ultra-poor. The net per capita food-grain availability declines with the population increase. Poverty and hunger affect the weakest: women and children. Every second mother is malnourished, and every second baby is underweight. In the 1-4 years age group female mortality is about one-third higher than male mortality.
- The main cause of food insecurity is low purchasing power, due to lack of employment opportunities in general, and seasonal unemployment in agriculture in particular. Additionally, recurring natural disasters deprive people of their assets.
- With an estimated 10-15% shortfall in domestic food grain production and without great purchasing power for imports, Bangladesh is in need of food aid. Planning regional harvests is highly insecure. Presently food aid fills 30 % of the gap (WFP estimates). WFP estimates a greater gap between domestic production and demand than the GoB. This is because WFP takes upgraded diets as a basis, while the GoB's self-sufficiency figures are based on the nutritional status quo.
- National goals of the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (I-PRSP) are: increased employment and income; improved education, health and nutrition; advancement of woman; decreased vulnerability of the poor to disasters; and enhanced participatory governance and articulation of the poor. The paper puts development oriented measures to the fore. The I-PRSP is committed to the MDGs.
- In the last decades, Bangladesh has already achieved a greater per-capita income, reduction of population growth, more primary and secondary education, reduction of gender gaps in education, a decrease in child mortality and improvements in child nutrition. The I-PRSP also mentions large capacities for disaster management and a reduction of chronic food shortage.
- Priorities of the Food Security Policy are: self-sufficiency in food grain production at a higher level of per-capita consumption; increased production of various foodstuffs (via market mechanisms and incentive prices); modernisation of agriculture.
- Prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the general population is still low. Given continued high-risk behaviour, however, a rapid increase is expected. The GoB's Strategic Plan addresses the issue by means of awareness-raising and prevention measures.

2.2 WFP INTERVENTIONS IN BANGLADESH

2.2.1 Portfolio of Interventions and its Evolution Since 1997

80. WFP's food aid and food security operations in the country reflect Bangladesh's striving to **address chronic food insecurity and poverty problems**. WFP country portfolio puts great value on development oriented operations. In the past years – except 1999, a year of impending natural disaster –, development oriented operations made up between 85% and 99% of the total tonnage. Table 6 illustrates the shares in volume.

Table 6: Amount of Food (MT) Distributed under CP, PRRO, EMOP, Special Operations

| Year | CP | PRRO | EMOP | CHT | TOTAL |
|--------------|-----------|--------|---------|--------|-----------|
| 1997 | 618,948 | 14,526 | | | 633,474 |
| 1998 | 628,931 | 15,340 | 11,972 | 17,735 | 673,978 |
| 1999 | 263,283 | 1,971 | 129,659 | | 394,913 |
| 2000 | 234,595 | 2,576 | 15,214 | | 252,385 |
| 2001 | 346,114 | 3,510 | 56,688 | | 406,312 |
| 2002 | 255,392 | 1,923 | | | 257,315 |
| 2003 | 167,580 | 6,313 | | | 173,893 |
| TOTAL | 2,514,843 | 46,159 | 213,533 | 17,735 | 2,792,270 |

Source: WFP Country Office Bangladesh, May 2004.

81. The focus on food aid under the CP between 1997 and 2003 shows the **interest accorded to CP operations, even if the quantity of food distributed under the CP shrank** from 618 million MT in 1997 to a mere 167 million MT in 2003. The absence of EMOPs during the years 1997, 2002 and 2003 and the distribution of food under CHT projects in 1998 only, during the period considered, further highlight the large amount of food earmarked for CP activities.

Country Programme 1997-2001

82. The CP 1997-2001 pursued two goals:

- (i) **“to build assets and promote self-reliance among the poor”** with the following key objectives: i) establishing a sustainable break in the cycle of poverty, thereby enhancing food security; ii) greater direct participation of women; iii) greater focus on the poorest; and iv) expanded micro-credits to the poor.
- (ii) **“to save lives in emergency situations”** with the key objective of enhanced emergency preparedness.

83. It comprised three basic projects (or ‘activities’ in WFP terminology):

- a) **Basic Activity 1: Rural Development (RD)** - no. 2197/10. It concentrates on creating, improving and rehabilitating public assets by **flood control, drainage and irrigation infrastructure; upgrading of roads; rehabilitation of inland fish ponds; and tree-planting**. To some extent the RD also facilitates the creation of participants’ personal and family assets. The activity’s implementing partners differed from component to component. 52% of the CP’s resources were allocated to this activity.
- b) **Basic Activity 2: Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)** - no. 2226/7. It offers vulnerable women opportunities to develop new survival strategies by providing (i) **training in income generating skills**, (ii) **basic knowledge on nutrition, health and social issues**, (iii) **access to credit for establishing micro-enterprises**, and (iv) **further NGO support**. The main implementing partner of this development package is the Department of Women Affairs (DWA). Other partners are government agencies and NGOs. 47% of the CP’s resources were allocated to this activity.
- c) **Basic Activity 3: Protracted Refugee Operation**. It provides relief to 45,000 refugees from Myanmar (required about 1% of the planned resources of the CP).

Country Programme 2001-2005

84. The 2001-2005 CP’s goal is **“to bring about sustainable improvements in food and nutrition security for ultra-poor households”**. In keeping with the EDP’s key objectives, the CP key objectives are:

- i) enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related needs;
- ii) enable poor households, especially their female members, to invest in human capital through education and training;

- iii) make it possible for poor families, especially female-headed ones, to gain and preserve assets; and
- iv) mitigate the effects of natural disasters and strengthen disaster preparedness in areas vulnerable to recurring severe floods and cyclones.

85. The **three basic activities/projects** (plus one supplementary) of the current CP are detailed below (2.2.2).

Resourcing

86. The CP 1997–2001 had a basic resource level of 1.65 million tons for four years, i.e. 412,500 tons per year.²⁴ The Country Programme 2001-2005 on food security and nutrition (budget: US\$ 58 million) has a basic resource level of 800,000 tons (or 160,000 tons per year) at an operational cost of US \$142.6 million over a period of five years²⁵. From 1997 (included) until May 2004 the resources available to WFP amounted to 2,892,425 MT of food²⁶. These resources were allocated as follows (in brackets: amount in 2002):

- 48% (75%) for Vulnerable Group Development (VGD);
- 37% (14%) for Rural Development (mainly food for work projects);
- 4% (3%) for Integrated Food Security Projects (IFS);
- 1% (4%) for School Feeding;
- 7% (1%) for Emergency Operations (EMOP);
- 2% for Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRROs);
- 1% (3%) for Chittagong Hill Tracts Projects.

87. WFP's food aid resources for development have progressively declined since 1998. The transition from the first to the second CP alone was marked by a **52% reduction in funds**. From 2001 to 2002, WFP's operational expenditures for development decreased from US\$ 29,307,000 to US\$ 24,131,000. In 2002, the only focus area under Food Aid And Development that received higher contributions from WFP was asset creation (FFA).

88. Since 1997 the quantity of wheat made available to WFP in Bangladesh has shrunk to about 100,155 MT (May 2004), while WFP faced a greater number of potential beneficiaries.²⁷ In 2003/2004, the GoB planned to procure a total of 0.75 million MT (rice 0.55 million MT; wheat 0.20 million MT). The widening gap between supply and demand partially explains certain **policy changes in WFP's development oriented programmes**:

- a narrowed focus on the coverage of the five EDP fields of activity;
- increased importance of CP linkages with other WFP operations;
- adoption of the EDP as a concise and efficiency oriented policy instrument;
- shift from the maintenance of large-scale general infrastructure (such as embankments) with WFP food assistance to small-scale community assets, as in the IFS Programme;
- endorsement of documentation and evaluation reports concerning WFP activities.

89. Generally, the decrease and even more seriously the lack of allocated resources compared with the planned target are a great challenge to WFP Bangladesh. They force WFP to use its available resources in an ever more cost-effective way (e.g. improved targeting of the neediest, leakage reduction, concentration of activities (area based approach; ref. 3.3.3) and to demand a greater contribution from the GoB. They also limit the scope of interventions (e.g. in IFS, ref. 3.3.3).

²⁴ Country Programme 1997-2001 document p.11.

²⁵ Country Programme 2001-2005 document p.24, annex II.

²⁶ WFP Country Office, Dhaka.

²⁷ Despite a promising economic development in the country, the gap widens due to the growing population, natural disasters which hamper the local production, and an income distribution which does not yet benefit wide sections of the population, so that private entrepreneurs face limited purchasing power. Growth in rural areas was broad-based, while urban growth mainly benefited the relatively affluent.

90. The overall importance of the country, inhabited by 133 million people and subject to recurrent natural disasters, was stressed in the international debate on food aid and food security issues in order to win potential donors for commitments (cf. section 3.2.6).

Changes in Programming

91. A comparison of both CPs shows a **gradual strategic move from initially purely relief oriented assistance to more development-focused activities**. The EDP surely played a role in this (cf. section 3.3.1). However, several changes promoted by the EDP had already occurred before 1999 - cf. the chronology of two activities in the boxes below. In VGD (on-going activities are detailed in 2.2.2) food aid has been used for 30 years to enable ultra-poor rural women in chronic crises to enter the development process. A second example is RD (Rural Development). For easier reading, the respective in-depth information (historic background) has been subsumed in boxes.

92. Meanwhile, WFP offers awareness-raising for the prevention of HIV, in collaboration with its implementing partners, and is eager to mainstream AIDS prevention in its training curricula and existing CP activities. There is **no specific activity provided for in the current CP that would tackle HIV/ AIDS**. The still low prevalence of infections and the non-identification of infected persons do not justify an intervention with food aid specifically for the support of food insecure HIV/AIDS-infected and affected households. It is also deemed improbable that WFP will target **food assistance to HIV infected persons** in the near future because there are no sufficient testing institutions and organisations in Bangladesh, and the population does not yet seem willing to undergo such tests. This limits the chances to outline the target group for potential assistance. High risk groups such as drug addicts and sex workers, on the other hand, among whom the disease currently prevails, are not specific mandatory target groups of WFP. However, women whose family members are affected by HIV could well make up a significant part of the beneficiaries in the future, according to a WFP official: "They will surely be included in the projects".

Phases of VGD

The activity can be divided into three main phases: I) **relief and rehabilitation for destitute women**; ii) **introduction of a 'development package' to ensure that women derive sustainable benefits once the food ration discontinues**; iii) **expansion of development oriented principles and focus on strengthening the grass-root level through increased participation**.

i) 1975-1984: Relief and rehabilitation: In the aftermath of a flood and a food crisis in 1974 an emergency operation named **Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF)** was launched. For a two years' period VGF provided food aid to destitute women.

ii) 1985-1996: Development piloting and learning: In 1985 the project was renamed **Vulnerable Group Development**. A collaborative food security intervention developed, jointly managed and implemented by the Government and WFP. In 1988, to gear the activity towards longer-term development, a joint task force of GoB and donors called SIFAD (Strengthening Institutions for Food-Assisted Development) elaborated recommendations. The GoB paved the way for incorporation of food aid into the Annual Development Plan. Principles that later were to be retained in the EDP were introduced and piloted to ensure that women derive sustainable benefits once the distribution of food rations discontinues.

iii a) 1997-2000: Development Expansion: From 1997, the overall management and co-ordination responsibilities of the VGD programme were transferred from the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MDMR) to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MWCA) [the implementation responsibilities at field level largely remained with the Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation (DRR) of MDMR along with MWCA's Department of Women Affairs (DWA)]. The Institutional Feeding component was phased out. The development package was elaborated further and project activities more strongly targeted towards food insecure areas. More implementing partners were contracted and enabled to combine food aid with financial and technical assistance.

iii b) 2001-2005: Nutrition Focus: WFP support to certain components was scaled down or phased out in 2002 (cf. 2.2.2). The nutritional value of the food ration was upgraded (e.g. introduction of micro-nutrient fortified wheat flour, provided in sealed bags), nutrition and health education were expanded. Programme activity key performance indicators were developed and a process monitoring system established.

Phases of RD

The country-wide Rural Development Project dates back to the 1970s food crises as WFP shifted away from emergency food aid to food support for rehabilitation of infrastructure. RD covered:

- water and pilot sectors (rehabilitation of embankments, of irrigation canals) under the Bangladesh Water Development Board),
- roads sector (rehabilitation of rural roads and road structures) under the Local Government Engineering Department,
- fisheries sector (rehabilitation of water bodies) under the Department of Fisheries,
- forestry sector (plantation and maintenance of trees) under the Forest Department.

(i) 1974-1989: National Relief Works Programme: Initially, the activity concentrated on relief, with corresponding pro-relief institutional arrangements. Food-for-work activities were used to link up food distribution with employment generation, line agencies were involved.

(ii) 1990-1996: Food-Assisted Works Programme for Water and Land Development: Donors and government emphasised the development use of food aid; institutional arrangements were redefined; government line agencies became involved; food aid was integrated into the Annual Development Plan; emphasis was put on the selection of schemes and the quality of implementation; activities were diversified into Road/Water/Forestry/Fisheries; training and capacity-building were provided; from 1994 the activity was called **Rural Development Programme**.

iii) 1997-2000: Rural Development Project: Increased focus on people; introduction of skill training, savings and credit component; involvement of NGOs; arrangements made for participants' long-term benefit from fisheries and forestry schemes; increased resource allocation to women; capacity development training for GoB officials; non-food items support.

(iv) 2001-2005: Integrated Food Security Project (IFS) – follow-up project of RD: Fine-tuned targeting; participatory selection of participants and activities; local-level committees for implementation and co-ordination; focus on nutritional conditions; orientation and training in basic health, sanitation, personal hygiene and nutrition, increased focus on skills and knowledge development; access to services (micro-credit, referral system to health facilities).

2.2.2 Key Issues of CP and Outline of On-going Interventions

93. Two types of WFP operations are currently underway in Bangladesh:

- a) **Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO): “Assistance to the Refugees from Myanmar”** (PRRO 10045.2). It has as main objectives: i) to meet the basic nutritional needs of the some 22,000 registered refugees; ii) to safeguard the nutritional status of vulnerable groups; iii) to stimulate self-reliance through participation in training and education activities; and iv) to provide a safety-net to particularly vulnerable families through FFW activities. The operation provides a general food ration, targeted supplementary feeding projects, school feeding and FFW (planned total cost Jan.-Dec. 2004: US\$ 2.0 million).
- b) **Development/Country Programme (CP):** It includes the following four projects, which in part are continuations of activities under the previous CP:
1. Basic programme activity 1: Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) – expansion of the former VGD project no. 2226/7;
 1. Basic programme activity 2: Integrated Food Security (IFS) – new activity;
 2. Basic programme activity 3: Rural Development (RD) - continuation of the former RD project no. 2197/10. It is planned that this should be phased out and progressively integrated into IFS.
 3. Supplementary programme activity: School Feeding (SFP) - new activity.

94. A detailed description of the Programme components is provided in the following boxes, with remarks on rationales, strategies, target groups, range of activities, and synergies. In the report's subsequent analyses reference is made to the boxes, as the need for detailed information arises.

Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) is a national, county-wide activity that is co-funded by WFP, bilateral donors and the GoB on approximately equal terms. Dating back to 1974, it is today implemented by the MWCA and the DRR in partnership with NGOs. Covering the whole of the country, VGD tries to allocate its resources particularly to very highly food insecure areas. Targeting is based on Resource Allocation and VAM maps that include poverty and food insecurity indicators.

With its 462,000 tons of commodities in wheat value equivalents (of which 60,000 tons of wheat are provided by the Government) **VGD** receives 57% of the total planned CP basic resources²⁸. VGD has three components:

- **Union Parishad VGD (UPVGD)** covers about 90% of the VGD women;
- **Women Training Centres (WTCs)** and
- **Group Leader Extension Workers (GLEWs)**, phased out in 2002.

VGD provides technical training packages (skills training, awareness-raising on social, legal, health and nutrition issues, basic literacy and numeracy skills) to annually 500,000 hard-core poor women in rural areas. The participants are selected by the Union VGD Committee (50% are selected by female committee members). 175 to 250 'VGD cards' are allocated per union in the higher food insecure areas with a minimum of 30 cards per union in the low food insecure areas. Participants are considered as "graduates" when they complete this programme. On successful graduation, these women are able to access micro-credit services from the NGOs and diversify their livelihoods. Regular membership with the NGO enables them to access services and obtain continued support for their micro-enterprises. 'Mainstreaming' participants into regular NGO development programmes entails compulsory monthly savings of 25 Taka (≈ 0.43 US\$, exchange rate of May 2004) and potential micro-credit support.

To reduce food gaps and compensate for their involvement in the development package, VGD provides women with food aid (30 kg of wheat per participant per month, or 25 kg fortified wheat flour) over a period of 12 months (WTC), or 24 months (UPVGD) - referred to as the "**VGD cycle**", combined with training in marketable income generation skills and functional awareness on social and economic issues.

To ensure that socio-economic achievements are translated into women's and children's improved nutritional status, the **VGD** plans to strengthen its focus on nutrition through collaborating with the National Nutrition Programme. Another step is improving the nutritional value of the food rations: Coarse wheat is gradually being replaced by micronutrient-fortified wheat flour.

Integrated Food Security (IFS) is a WFP-assisted government project, initiated in 2002, which is implemented in co-ordination with partner NGOs and community based organisations. IFS focuses on improving food security and the nutritional well-being of ultra-poor households in the most food insecure areas. Covering areas that are not served by the National Nutrition Programme it operates today in three divisions (area based approach) selected according to VAM. Apart from women in ultra-poor households, specific target groups are the vulnerable groups of **mothers, adolescent girls and pre-school children**.

With its 225,000 tons of commodities in wheat value equivalents, IFS takes up 28% of the total planned CP basic resources. IFS has three components that combine different types of food-aided interventions:

- **Food-for-Assets (FFA);**
- **Community Nutrition Initiative (CNI);**
- **Training and Nutrition Centres (TNC).**

All components focus on enabling for development through the transfer of know-how. Upgraded education by means of the Primary School Feeding Programme (see below) follows the same objective. Such upgrading is reached by stimulating enrolment, increasing attendance at school and improving the learning capacity of the pupils. IFS and TNC trainers are women who are recruited from the community where they are supposed to work.

²⁸ It should be noted that the resources approved by the WFP Executive Board will not necessarily be made available to the country but the actual allocation of resources will be done on an annual basis and be subject to the availability of resources (Operation Contract, annex Ia, p: I).

Food-for-Assets (FFA)

FFA promotes human and capital resource development among the ultra-poor: i) **by providing training and creating awareness on nutrition, health, social, and disaster preparedness issues and on marketable skills for income generating activities** (12 months Food-for-Training); and ii) **by enabling participants to work on community infrastructure development and productive asset creation** (12 months Food-for-Work) that serve income-generation and disaster-preparedness purposes.

Participants are enrolled for 24 months ("FFA cycle"); they receive food aid (family ration of wheat grain) and cash (government contribution) as an incentive to mobilise resources and create small infrastructure, and as an enabler to participate in training activities. Saving schemes are compulsory. The food supplement is meant as an immediate and short-term provision to the malnourished.

In FFA (FFW and FFT) the participants receive 50% of their entitlement as food and 50% as cash. For FFW activities participants receive 2 kg wheat and Tk 20 per working day. During the FFT period participants are entitled to receive 20 kg wheat and Tk 100 per month.

Community Nutrition Initiative (CNI)

In the same communities, the CNI provides individual take-home rations of imported micronutrient-fortified Wheat-Soy-Blend (WSB) to mothers for their own consumption and their malnourished children. This **community-managed supplementary feeding** is combined with **nutrition and health communication for behaviour change and a referral system to nearest health facilities**. Pregnant and nursing women and their young children are the primary beneficiaries.

Training and Nutrition Centres (TNC)

In other communities TNC-participating ultra-poor women receive 20 kg wheat to cover their opportunity costs of attending the training sessions (12 months cycle) on nutrition, health, legal and social issues, and in marketable income generating skills. The centres provide child care to the children (aged 6 months to 6 years) of participant mothers and on-site supplementary feeding for these children. Adolescent girls receive training and on-site supplementary feeding (micronutrient-fortified wheat-soy-blends). Trainers are female community members who act as promoters within their respective communities.

Capacity-building activities particularly at local level (communities, ward, upazilla) for community members, user committees, CBOs, NGOs, local government and other implementing partners, are a vital part of the activity. It is envisaged that participants of FFA and TNC, after completion of their cycles, enter a micro-credit scheme and NGO mainstream development programmes. To achieve this, WFP and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) jointly select suitable partner NGOs according to defined criteria; conditions are laid down in the terms of reference for the NGOs, which become part of a contract/agreement signed by LGED, NGO and WFP; WFP also provides capacity-building support (training, computer technology and communication, etc.). Micro-credit support to the women beneficiaries is usually provided at the end of the training. Services provided under TNC are more comprehensive than the services provided by WTCs: In addition to training for the women, there is awareness-raising for adolescent girls, and on-site feeding for the malnourished adolescent girls and children.

The *Food-for-Asset* and the *Community Nutrition Initiative* components are rooted in the Local Government Engineering Department under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives. The *TNC* component is implemented under the Department of Women Affairs within the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

Rural Development (RD)

Rural Development (RD) is an activity that was built up on traditional sectoral infrastructure based and centrally planned food-for-work interventions. It was gradually phased out (except in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Area, where the respective activities were resumed in 2002). Since 2004 food-for-work activities have been concentrated in the FFA component of the IFS activity, with a stronger focus on the beneficiaries.

With 113,000 tons of commodities in wheat value equivalents RD consumes 15% of the total planned CP basic resources.

An example is the fisheries sector. Up to June 2000 about 1,200 ha water bodies and embankments were completed (out of 3,200 ha targeted). An additional 54 ha of hilly water bodies and embankments were re-excavated and constructed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Until June 2000 the project employed 37,700 rural poor (of which 21,500 men and 16,200 women) and produced 2,900 MT of fish. WFP contributed 70 % to the cost involved in the form of wheat; the remaining 30 % were contributed by GoB in cash. The historic development of RD has already been sketched above.

School Feeding Programme (SFP)

In May 2002, a revised operational contract gave way to one of the largest WFP-assisted School Feeding Projects worldwide. The **School Feeding Programme** covers all government and NGO primary schools in a selected programme area. After successful implementation of a pilot project in the Southwest it started as a full-fledged programme activity in mid-2002.

In 2003 the school feeding project already reached 1.2 million primary school children (grade 1 to 5), of which about half are girls, in food insecure rural areas and urban slums.

The activity is scheduled for three years (2002-2004) with a total of 160,000 tons of wheat (12 million US\$ p.a.)²⁹. The imported wheat is bartered to allow subsequent **distribution of a total of 40,000 tons of locally produced biscuits** (144 million rations annually).

Every school child receives a supplementary feeding of 75 grams of a high energy protein biscuit as on-site mid-morning snack for 240 school days in a year. The biscuit is fortified with a premix of vitamins and minerals that provide 75% of the daily required allowances of a school child. **The food aid serves as incentive for enrolment and retention of children in school from ultra-poor/poor households by offsetting opportunity cost and enables families to send their children to school.** It also aims to improve the concentration span and learning capacity by alleviating short-term hunger and micronutrient deficiencies.

At school level the food distribution is managed by the School Management Committee. The activity is implemented by the Directorate of Primary Education under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.

Key Features of WFP Interventions in Bangladesh

- In Bangladesh food aid and food security programming largely address chronic food insecurity and poverty. The main target group is ultra-poor women in rural areas.
- The current CP (2001 – 2005) includes three basic activities and one supplementary activity, which complement each other: (1) Vulnerable Group Development, (2) Integrated Food Security, (3) Rural Development and (4) Supplementary School Feeding.
- Through its emphasis on participation at local government and village level the current CP became increasingly needs oriented. Nutrition and health care interventions were strengthened. Monitoring is being refined. With regard to HIV/AIDS, WFP acts in line with government policies that currently prioritise preventive measures like public awareness-raising.
- There is a marked decline in resources for WFP's food aid for development programmes. Compared with its forerunner, the current CP works on half of the resources.
- Continued decline of food aid volumes required higher efficiency and husbandry in the use of resources. This gave rise to:
 - a narrowed focus on the coverage of EDP fields of activity;
 - increased importance of CP linkages with other WFP operations;
 - streamlining of documentation and evaluation procedures and enhanced quality control of the respective reports, with a view to creating a more reliable information base;
 - shift from large-scale general infrastructure (such as embankments) with WFP food assistance to small-scale community assets.

²⁹ Operational guidelines on the implementation of WFP-assisted school feeding programme. July 2003. p.3.

3 MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 HOW RELEVANT IS THE CP IN TERMS OF THE EVOLVING CONTEXT OF POVERTY REDUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY?

3.1.1 Country Programme Coherence with EDP Principles and Objectives

Direct Reference to EDP Objectives

95. **VGD** is designed to address EDP's strategic objectives to (1) "enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related needs", (2) "enable poor households, especially their female members, to invest in human capital through education and training" and (3) "make it possible for poor families, especially female-headed ones, to gain and preserve assets".

To this end, VGD's objectives are: i) to enhance the income-earning capacity and self-reliance of ultra-poor and food insecure women in order to ensure their graduation into mainstream development programmes; and ii) to improve the nutritional status of malnourished women and children.

96. **IFS** is designed to address EDP's strategic objectives to (1) "enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related needs", (2) "enable poor households, especially their female members, to invest in human capital through education and training", (3) "make it possible for poor families, especially female-headed ones, to gain and preserve assets" and (4) "mitigate the effects of natural disasters and strengthen disaster preparedness in areas vulnerable to recurring severe floods and cyclones".

To this end, IFS's objectives are: i) to enable ultra-poor and food insecure households and communities to enhance their income-earning capacity and disaster preparedness by creating human and physical assets; and ii) to assist vulnerable groups in meeting their nutritional needs.

97. **RD** is designed to address EDP's strategic objectives to (3) "make it possible for poor families, especially female-headed ones, to gain and preserve assets" and (4) "mitigate the effects of natural disasters and strengthen disaster preparedness in areas vulnerable to recurring severe floods and cyclones".

To this end, RD's objectives are: i) to provide food and employment to the ultra-poor and food insecure in highly food insecure areas at times of critical need; and ii) to create rural infrastructure and community assets for disaster mitigation in order to sustain development gains for the hungry poor.

98. **SFP** addresses the EDP's strategic objective to (2) "enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and training".

To this end, the SFP's objective is to improve children's access to primary education, especially those living in food and nutrition insecure areas through increased enrolment and retention of children in primary schools.

Adaptations in Programme Design

99. The following innovations in Bangladesh's current CP (as compared the 1997-2001 CP) were found to be an adoption of EDP recommendations:

- increased integration of WFP activities in the overall framework of poverty alleviation;
- harmonisation of the CP's orientation with that of UNDAF (United Nations Development Assistance Framework);
- clear link between the activities promoted and governmental sectoral policies;
- refined targeting: shift to a more area based focus for interventions; introduction of VAM (Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping) as a tool for more concise geographical targeting based on relative food insecurity and vulnerability levels of upazillas (sub-district level);

- needs based approaches for a stronger orientation towards beneficiaries' demands: participatory planning of community development activities; increased involvement of local government and NGOs communities' social control over project activities and ownership of assets created;
 - stronger emphasis on nutrition: nutrition and health care education, provision of nutrition supplements, fortification of foods. This considerably contributes to the effectiveness of interventions;
 - results oriented monitoring to enable decision-makers to adjust CP strategies on solid grounds; monitoring, supervision and reporting tasks of all stakeholders are laid down in signed contracts; and
 - integration of HIV/AIDS issues in the training curricula.
100. In the case of **VGD** the following features are in line with EDP requirements:
- introduction of a development package to integrate short-term food security and nutrition with longer-term development – aiming to increase the most disadvantaged women's self-reliance;
 - partnerships with NGOs that offer implementation capacities at the grass-roots level;
 - training in and promotion of income generation together with saving schemes and micro-credit, which opens the way to other development activities; and
 - providing food aid in association with nutrition and health care education.

101. Under the **School Feeding Programme** (SFP), the daily distribution of micronutrient-fortified High Energy Protein biscuits to children is not only intended to enable them to relieve short-term hunger and thus concentrate on lessons, but also to provide an incentive and opportunity for extremely poor parents to send their children to school.

102. Another case in point is the current **Food-for-Asset (FFA)** component of the newly started **Integrated Food Security (IFS)** project. A comparison with the forerunning **Rural Development (RD)** activity shows how the new project integrates EDP principles: i) explicit linkage to the improved co-ordination of poverty alleviation efforts at various levels; ii) linkage to the Government's decentralisation efforts; iii) more comprehensive development oriented benefits are envisaged; and iv) focus on targeting, participation, nutrition. FFA's 'mother project' IFS targets several nutritionally vulnerable groups in the same area.

Table 7: Emergence of IFS (FFA Component) out of RD as illustrated by a comparison of characteristic features

| | Rural Development (1997-2001) | Integrated Food Security (2001-2005) FFA Component |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Objectives | Common for each of the four sectors (water, road, fisheries, forestry) are: - Creating immediate employment opportunities in order to improve food security among the poorest of the rural poor; - Contributing to target access to skill development, provision of credit etc. leading to a degree of self-reliance above poverty-line. | - Enabling ultra-poor and food insecure households and communities to enhance their income-earning capacity and disaster preparedness by creating human and physical assets; - Assisting vulnerable groups in meeting their nutritional needs. |
| Intended benefits | | Amongst others they include: - Improved capacities of households and communities in income-earning, disaster preparedness and social knowledge; - Enhanced capabilities and organisational capacities of communities; - More transparency and accountability of local (union, upazilla) government and NGO - Improved co-ordination between poverty-alleviation programmes at all levels; - Strengthening of the government's decentralisations efforts. |
| Executing agencies | Government line ministries and their respective departments | Local Government Department, other line ministries/agencies provide technical support |
| Assets created | Emphasis on large scale civil works of broad public utility, some smaller scale assets. | Emphasis on smaller scale directly productive assets; identified through a participatory process with participants |
| Targeting | | Geographic targeting using VAM's newly produced maps for Bangladesh; area based approach; participatory process to identify ultra-poor women at community level; more supply oriented approach. |
| Function of food aid | - Income transfer to workers; - Employment generation. | - Incentive for communities to mobilise own resources for the creation of small infrastructures; - Incentive for participants to participate in training sessions; - Contribution to meet the food gap. |
| Food aid provision | Imported commodities (wheat); food and cash compensation at an average 70:30 ratio; Cash component is GoB contribution (from the 10 million US\$ annually). | Imported commodities (wheat); food and cash compensation at an average 50:50 ratio; Cash component is GoB contribution (from the 10 million US\$ annually). |
| INTERNAL TRANSPORT | The Government of Bangladesh provides adequate handling, transport to government storage centres and to distribution points. WFP covers up to 50% of the costs incurred by the Government for this Internal Landside Transportation, Storage and Handling (ITSH) of the wheat. | WFP continues to cover up to 50% of the costs incurred by the Government for Internal Landside Transportation, Storage and Handling (ITSH) of the wheat. |

Sources: Country Programme 1997-2001; Country Programme 2001-2005; Operational Contract of WFP project BGD 2197/10 Rural Development Programme between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the World Food Programme, Dhaka 1997; Operational Contract between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the World Food Programme covering commitments for the period January 2001-December 2005, Dhaka 2001.

Key findings on Country Programme Coherence with the Enabling Development Policy

- The current CP addresses four out of five EDP strategic objectives:
 - Enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs;
 - Enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and training;
 - Make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets;
 - Mitigate the effects of natural disasters, in areas vulnerable to recurring crises of this kind.
- Many changes that have 'inspired' the EDP formulation were already piloted and partly implemented by WFP Bangladesh before the EDP was officially adopted in 1999.
- As early as in the late 80s, donors and the GoB recognised the need for a systematic development oriented approach in order to assist poor households with food consumption in the short-term to enable them to enter a longer term development process.
- WFP's official adoption of the EDP has favoured a more systematic and comprehensive application of the key principles. The main adaptations under the current CP include:
 - Increased integration of CP activities in the overall framework (national and international) of poverty alleviation;
 - Improved geographical targeting and beneficiary targeting procedures;
 - Increased use of participatory approaches;
 - Stronger focus on nutrition-focused interventions;
 - Improved monitoring.
- The design of CP activities is coherent with the EDP principles and directives promoted by WFP.

3.1.2 Relevance to the Country Policies and Context and to the International Priorities

National Policies and Programmes

103. The CP is highly relevant to Bangladesh's context of poverty, malnutrition and food insecurity. The CP's gender focus, its focus on nutrition, particularly of children, pregnant and lactating mothers, and on the creation of community and other assets conforms to the country's evolving poverty and food security situation. The same applies to the enhancement of skills, awareness-raising and income generating activities.

104. As sketched above, the country's socio-economic climate is not conducive to women's independent economic activities. Many female-headed households do not receive any support from men. In this situation, the target beneficiaries are empowered by the projects in terms of employment, income, skill upgrading, knowledge transfer, etc.³⁰ By addressing nutritional requirements of poor women (e.g. fortified 'atta' and interventions for pregnant women and lactating mothers) the CP **follows up with existing governmental policies and programmes such as the National Nutrition Programme**. In VGD, relevance is restricted to some degree by the activity selection criteria, which exclude elder and younger women, and those who are physically weak or disabled.

105. WFP has a long history of collaboration with the GoB. All WFP projects support government interventions, executed through operational GoB-WFP contracts. The government

³⁰ In targeting ultra-poor women and providing them with food assistance and skills VGD, for instance, strives to improve women's calorie intake, makes them socially aware and supports their abilities to earn incomes (by participating in NGO programmes and gaining access to credit). This is structural support that is principally consistent with the government's efforts to endorse poor women's development and their integration into the economy.

is the main implementing agency and also assumes the key role in monitoring. Cooperation with NGOs is also channelled through contracts with the government.

106. Just as the GoB policy requires involvement of local government bodies and NGOs in the grassroots developmental process³¹, implementation of the Country Programme, and the dissemination of the EDP concept alike also rely on such local government institutions.

107. As such, the CP broadly reflects the evolving national context and priorities. WFP activities are consistent with the overall framework of poverty alleviation, food security, and government sectoral policies.

108. In a country with maternal and infant mortality rates that skyrocket with poverty, and with an excessively higher female than male mortality rate in certain age groups, the CP ultimately takes up issues of universal human rights. **The CP has a high relevance with respect to poverty and poverty of opportunity, which are largely genderised in Bangladesh.**

CP's Relevance to the International Context

109. In an international ODA environment that will increasingly be characterised by shortage of resources and striving for synergies, WFP's Bangladesh CP can be a model in terms of focused targeting on the poor and ultra-poor, and in terms of the preference for small projects or activities in partnership with other agencies. Project objectives that aim at long-term sustainable development and practices of careful monitoring as they were introduced into the CP have already proved highly relevant to contexts beyond Bangladesh. This is also reflected in the shift, by most other donors working in Bangladesh, from basic rehabilitation and reconstruction activities to enabling development. Attempts to build a suitable bridge to development as part of an acceptable exit strategy will remain a central issue in global contemporary food aid.

110. The GoB's extensive commitment to international conventions and objectives is described in detail in Annex 5.

Key Findings with Respect to the National and International Context

- Based on WFP Bangladesh Country Strategy Outline (2000), WFP's CP 2001 – 2005 provides a framework for WFP-supported activities that is consistent with national development strategies and the activities of other development partners. The CP cycle is in line with the UNDAF.
- WFP's CP links up with existing governmental policies and programmes such as the National Nutrition Programme. The fact that the government is the main implementing agency, with a key role in monitoring, and the existence of operational contracts for all activities displays the strong bonds between GoB and WFP.
- The CP's activities address the most urgent national issues and priorities (combating poverty, asset creation, women's empowerment, nutrition, education). Target groups are the weakest members of society.
- The striving for women's rights, and children's welfare that characterises the CP links up with the GoB's signatory status to the respective international conventions and with existing national policies in this field.
- Relevance is restricted to some degree by VGD's selection criteria, which exclude elder and younger women, and those who are physically weak or disabled.
- Also, WFP's turn from large-scale FFW programmes may have decreased its relevance for overall vulnerability reduction.

³¹ The Fifth Five Year Plan 1997-2002. Planning Commission. Ministry Planning. GOB.

3.1.3 Complementarity and Integration with Other Operations (EMOP/PRRO)

111. WFP's Country Programme is to **bridge emergency and rehabilitation with development**. In practice, emergency, rehabilitation and development activities form a contiguum, i.e. their phases are not sequential and mutually distinctive but overlap and intersect. It is therefore important that CP activities offer some sort of interface for neighbouring operations, to enable an efficient and synergetic chain of interventions.

112. One example may be quoted from the Rural Development Project. Here, reconstruction and rehabilitation of settlements and embankments in flood-prone areas are part of the intervention. They are followed by training in animal husbandry and gardening or other income generating activities to support sustainable livelihoods. When the embankments were eroded and partly closed after inundations, they were covered with grass and trees were planted. These plantations were cared for by beneficiaries who received food and cash as an incentive and will partake in future profits from the plantations.

113. **EMOP and PRRO are often the basis for development oriented CP activities.** The striving for more concentrated efforts due to shrinking budgets has led to an even tighter connection between CP and EMOP/PRRO. Geographical concentration went along with the effort to base CP activities on existing elements. Further sharing of experience of how to move from EMOP/PRRO to development could bring up new ideas on streamlining.

Complementarities and Synergies with Other Donor Interventions

114. Complementarities and synergies can be noted with certain development oriented EU interventions in flood prevention/disaster mitigation (e.g. fortification of embankments, raising of parts of chars for flood protection).

115. **Complementarity of efforts has been established to some degree**, e.g. with the Asian Development Bank's and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (World Bank's) activities. The World Bank, for instance, supports the Bangladesh Development Service Centre (BDSC), a national NGO in Awareness Development and Mitigation (targeted beneficiaries: 35,823 families). Like WFP food supplies and WFP assisted training programmes, this project is health-related. ADB assists the same NGO in other areas to finance the Small-Scale Water Resource Development Support Project (community motivation and involvement for proper use of water resources for cultivation by local small farmer's families). WFP assists training programmes in homestead gardening. Here, an exchange of training documents and harmonisation of contents yet needs to be explored.

116. Since July 2003 the VGD has collaborated with the National Nutrition Programme. In April 2004 an agreement was signed between the GoB, World Bank, BRAC and WFP. This will create synergies. **It should be deliberated whether similar lines of cooperation could be established in the interest of creating synergies by approaching other programmes such as the EC-assisted Food Security for Vulnerable Group Development (FSVGD) in seven districts of northern Bangladesh, a project running until December 2005, if it is not extended.** The same objectives could be followed by close cooperation with the EC, DFID and the USAID-funded Food Security Capacity Strengthening Programme (FSCSP), which is implemented by the FAO. It should develop, establish and review the Food Security Training of Trainers.

117. As an umbrella for donor co-ordination and establishing strategic partnerships in sectoral and thematic areas involving both bilateral and multilateral agencies, the **Local Consultative Group (LCG)** was established in 1996. It serves to harmonise the activities of all donors involved in Bangladesh, avoid overlap, and facilitate the concentration of efforts on specific projects or areas. In the LCG, WFP is one of the organisations that represent the UN Country Team. Aid is co-ordinated in 22 thematic LCG sub-groups, of which WFP and FAO jointly chair the one on food. **In the joint meetings synergies are systematically investigated, as the**

Team was able to observe. However, a sufficient level of aid co-ordination and collaborative efforts has not yet been achieved (e.g. in coastal areas where complementary targeting shows deficits). To share information, FAO and other international organisations need agreements with agencies beyond WFP. Personal observations related by WFP CO staff point to a certain need to improve collaboration between FAO and WFP. No further evidence was furnished on this matter, though.

118. Widespread use of VAM information for project planning provides a noteworthy example of synergies and enhanced donor coordination, brought about by WFP. The National Nutrition Programme's mandatory components are regularly linked to WFP activities in a similar manner.

Key Findings on the Integration of the Activities with EMOP/PRRO and with Other Donor Interventions

- Increasingly, EMOP and PRRO are the basis for development oriented activities.
- Elements of EMOP/PRRO operations are already part of certain CP activities, to a varying degree (integrated packages of relief/rehabilitation and development-related measures). Due to these intersections, it is to be expected that present and future EMOP/ PRRO operations can fairly easily line up with development oriented activities of the CP and vice versa.
- Institutionalised joint donor meetings (Local Consultative Group) indicate the willingness of WFP and other organisations/donors to co-ordinate their interventions in Bangladesh. As one of 22 LCG sub-groups, the sub-group on food security is co-chaired by WFP and FAO. Their co-ordination, however, was felt to be at an inception stage. A less bureaucratic exchange of documents and enhanced co-ordination of interventions would seem profitable.
- In project preparation, information from WFP's VAM system is used synergistically by other donors to identify target areas.
- Projects sponsored by other donors such as flood protection (EC), health-related training, or training in homestead gardening touch the problem spheres of WFP-assisted projects. Exchange of experience and material could create synergies. Donor meetings could be used for starting such cooperation.

Relevance of the Country Programme's Targeting

119. Relevance depends upon WFP activities' being well adapted to the country-specific setting, and their being responsive to the partners' policies, needs, and priorities. Striving to assure optimal resource allocation to food insecure and highly food insecure areas by assessing regional variations in food security, the CP follows the GoB's policy on food insecurity and vulnerability. Both the Planning Commission and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics are involved in the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping System (VAM) used by WFP. The fact that other donors apply the VAM approach further indicates that WFP efforts are appreciated and considered helpful.

120. In Bangladesh, however, the extremely poor can be found everywhere. Thus geographically oriented targeting approaches (area based approaches) risk bypassing pockets of extreme poverty that may occur within regions that are better off overall. The GoB has identified such pockets in the Kushtia district, for instance, with the resulting proposal of including more areas in the project for a more equal distribution of resources. WFP and GoB agreed that not only the ultra-poor in the most food insecure geographic areas should be assisted, but also ultra-poor in less food insecure areas. WFP reacted by integrating some such areas, e.g. in Bogra and Jessore. Today, 75 % of the resources available to the VGD activities are earmarked for the most food insecure geographic areas and 25 % to moderately and low food insecure geographic areas.

121. This 25 % may not cover the actually existing need of the target group. However, with a fixed amount of resources, increased coverage conflicts with the desire to assist people in the most effective way. The number of applicants for training in IGAs is already higher than the number of places available (and the number of potential working or business opportunities that would enable economic survival).

122. As observed in Kushtia, other criteria such as the presence of potential implementing partners (NGOs for FFA and CNI, and CBOs for TNC) also play a role in the selection of sites within the clusters. **For pilot activities the presence of strong and experienced implementing partners was considered important.**

123. The IFS (Integrated Food Security Project) already applies an **improved targeting strategy**: i) participatory selection of project participants (the resulting social control assures that only the neediest persons are included); and ii) inclusion of nutritionally vulnerable groups of women, adolescent girls and pre-school children. For each component general selection criteria have been established to identify families with the least access to resources. Among those, priority is given to women-headed households and to those with virtually no productive assets. Participants in CNI (Community Nutrition Initiative) are identified by screening their nutritional status using the Mid-upper-arm Circumference (MUAC) for children of 12-24 months of age and for expecting and nursing women.³² Children aged 6-11 months are enrolled without screening.

124. While in FFA (Food for Assets) and CNI, ultra-poor households are identified by partner-NGOs and village inhabitants, in TNC (Training and Nutrition Centres) community based organisations are responsible for identification. The participatory selection process starts with key informant interviews to identify poor areas, followed by PRA workshops with the communities in these areas using mapping and wealth ranking exercises, followed by structured household surveys to verify the results obtained. For the final selection of participants a preliminary list of eligible households in the community is produced. This needs final approval by the upazilla FSAC (Food Security Assistance Committee). During the field visit it was observed that most of the participants meet at least one of the selection criteria. This was also confirmed by a study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (October 2003).

125. Overall, certain indicators merit further investigation. In a list of indicators to detect high seasonal unemployment, for instance (which indeed restrains access to food), the proportion of households with *non-agricultural* sources of income is taken. This is of doubtful value since it is particularly agricultural labourers that are affected by seasonality. Another indicator for targeting is the proportion of households who do not own agricultural land. While this is significant, one would wish to see landholding patterns included to the list, which are often an underlying cause of inequality in incomes.

126. As regards the criteria for VGD (Vulnerable Group Development), special projects may be needed for the elderly poor, some of whom may be unable to work. A diversified set of opportunities is also needed for those who prefer external employment over self-employment, either due to lack of entrepreneurial ability, inability to take risks, or lack of confidence. Otherwise the VGD project risks overlooking considerable numbers of the ultra-poor.

³² The identification and selection of malnourished children is still based on the MUAC tests since this measurement is relatively easy to perform. Basic information needed for calculating the Body Mass Index (weight, height) is not yet generally introduced due to greater administrative inputs needed, but it is planned to introduce this for future selection of malnourished children.

Key Findings on Targeting

- For targeting the neediest, WFP practises an area based approach using a Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping System (VAM). In this, WFP is assisted by the national Planning Commission and the Bureau of Statistics. Also, the presence of potential implementing partners plays a role in targeting.
- Participatory targeting is applied. Community based organisations and NGOs are involved in the identification of beneficiaries, thereby making targeting more relevant. The CP's targeting procedures (usually multi-step), have proved to be fairly successful, although certain indicators of the system merit refinement.
- Two disadvantages of VAM were noted during the mission: (i) the risk of overlooking isolated poor communities in areas that generally do not qualify for assistance by focusing on the most vulnerable areas, (ii) its blindness to inequalities in landholding patterns which often cause poverty. In response to (i), WFP has already modified the allocation of its VGD resources (25 % for moderately food insecure areas).
- Due to the decision to include only people of working age in the VGD activity, the CP leaves out elderly or handicapped poor people.

3.2 WHAT ARE THE MECHANISMS, MEANS AND TOOLS INTRODUCED/STRENGTHENED AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL TO FACILITATE EDP/CP IMPLEMENTATION?

3.2.1 Progress (and Changes) in Partnership

127. The EDP considers **implementation partnerships** a prerequisite to WFP involvement since food cannot be regarded as a stand-alone resource to promote development. Potential areas of collaboration include the entire spectrum of service delivery involving agriculture, livestock, fishery, education, health, nutrition, social safety net, micro-credit and social mobilisation.

128. In Bangladesh the Team found an array of institutionalised WFP partnerships - both strategic and implementation partnerships. As for implementation, intra-institutional partnership includes GoB agencies at macro-, meso- and micro-levels, Union Parishads, upazillas and the districts, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MWCA), the Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation (DRR), the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and others.³³ Such partnerships can entail cooperative synergies - as in the case of selection criteria for partner NGOs, which, in the case of IFS, are established by the Department of Women Affairs (DWA), independently, and recognised by WFP.

129. Apart from partnerships with the multilateral and bilateral donors, NGOs, CBOs and the private sector are actively involved in project implementation. The FSVGD Project (at Ulipur, Kurigram Sadar and Rajarjat), for instance, which deals with awareness and skill development training, is conducted by the NGO Bangladesh Development Service Centre (BDSC), and is jointly supported by the EC, WFP and the DWA.

³³ These are: Anuvob, BRAC, Canaan (KDAB), Disha, Dristidan, Hitoishi Bangladesh, OVA, Polli Sampad Samannaya Kendra, Proshika, RDRS, Rowmari RSDA, RRC, Shishuniloy RDRS, SSE, Suchana, Uttaran. MWCA is involved in planning, inter-ministerial coordination, resource allocation, issuance of administrative circulars, and progress review of the project. The DWA is responsible for the planning and management of implementation of the WTC component, planning and management of the development package services of the UPVGD component, planning and management of generated funds, and reporting. The DRR is involved in the selection of VGD women, management of wheat distribution, and reporting to WFP and MWCA. NGOs implement the development package services to VGD women, and are responsible for graduation of VGD women to their core development programme, besides monitoring and reporting to WFP and DWA.

Non-governmental Organisations

130. **The partnership between WFP and the NGOs was found to be effective for the implementation of the Country Programme.** Training, in general, is an area in which functioning partnership chains can be observed. While WFP provides food to encourage and enable poor women to undertake skills training, the training itself is usually provided by NGOs. After skills training has opened the way to micro-credit, such credits may be provided by NGOs again, such as BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee). In other cases WFP assisted the NGOs to create a foundation for future income generating activities. This took the form, for instance, of excavating some of the ponds in the Southwest for subsequent fish cultivation.

131. NGOs are important catalysts of successful implementation of WFP programmes at the grassroots level, and they can contribute considerably to the sustainability of achievements. 16 NGOs are involved in the School Feeding Project (SFP)³⁴: Annex 2 (Tables 1 and 2) shows the range and level of partnerships with NGOs in the remaining projects.

132. In IFS (Integrated Food Security), which comprises FFA, CNI and TNC (see 2.2.2), the Local Government Engineering Department under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives co-ordinates the FFA and CNI components, while the Department of Women Affairs co-ordinates the TNC component. **Detailed and specific operational guidelines together with implementing partner contracts were developed together with and disseminated to the implementing partners at all levels** (Central Government, NGOs, Local Government etc.) during workshops. They are still being refined according to the field-experience of each project component. Many agencies and NGOs have only recently been involved.

133. A vital point is the **good level of linkages that NGOs have established.** To make target beneficiaries' future IGAs successful, the beneficiaries need to have linkages with the markets/ marketing channels, the credit institutions, the local administration and the LGIs. The Team observed the NGOs' positive role in linkage creation and development. Some of the NGOs have their own shops in central places such as the capital. Due to economies of scale, these shops offer better chances to small entrepreneurs than if the entrepreneurs, who often are far away from the economic centres, were to try to sell their products without the assistance of the NGOs. Another linkage is the arrangement of business connections or subcontracts.

UN Agencies and Bilateral Donors

134. From a strategic point of view, WFP's partnership with the UN agencies and the bilateral donors is based on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Common Country Assessment (CCA). The CCA, an assessment of the development status (priority areas as basic social services, gender, institutional reform, environment, disaster management, food security, decentralisation and local governance) in a given country, with joint contributions by UN agencies, GoB and NGOs, is the foundation for UNDAF, which is in turn elaborated for individual UN member countries such as Bangladesh. UNDAF elaborates and contains the principles outlined by other strategy papers introduced and used by the UN Organisations and other partners such as CCF (UNDP), CSO (WFP), SAA (UNICEF), CPA (UNFPA), CCS (WHO) and CAS (World Bank). UNDAF's substantive issues are guided by national policy and programme frameworks, among other aspect.³⁵

135. UN agencies with a programme focus in food security and nutrition include FAO, WFP, UNICEF and WHO. The World Bank, too, is active in these fields. Along with UNDP, UNI-

³⁴ The SF programme makes a distinction between "partner NGOs" who are involved in implementing the programme (i.e. a total of four: RDRS, Proshika, Uttaran and RRC), and "receiving NGOs", whose NGO schools are assisted by the programme.

³⁵ United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2001-2005 Bangladesh. United Nations Bangladesh. November 2002.

CEF, WHO and FAO, WFP is a member of the UN Disaster Management Team. Table 8 illustrates the current partnership arrangements among UN agencies.

Table 8: The Pattern of UN System Collaboration:

| ORGANISATION | PARTNER |
|--------------|--|
| ILO | UNDP, UNICEF |
| IOM | UNDP, UNHCR |
| IMF | IBRD |
| UNDP | FAO, ILO, IOM, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, IBRD |
| UNESCO | UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR |
| UNFPA | UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO |
| UNHCR | IOM, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, WFP, WHO, IBRD |
| WFP | FAO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, IBRD |
| WHO | UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF |
| IBRD | FAO, IMF, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP |

Source: United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2001-2005 Bangladesh. United Nations Bangladesh 2002.

136. Among all organisations which pursue the collective aim of attaining the UNDAF objectives, **WFP holds the second highest share in resources: 25.5 percent of the total allocation.** This highlights the significant role that WFP is mandated to play.

137. Document reviews show that all partners have become development oriented in the sense of EDP. On the other hand, several donors had already followed an approach towards linking reconstruction and rehabilitation activities to development before 1999.

138. **Formally, collaboration with other donors is very well organised.** Within and beyond the Local Consultative Group (LCG), WFP collaborates with the donors, NGOs and other civil society organisations. Major partners among the bilaterals are the European Union³⁶, USAID, AusAID, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), and French Bilateral Assistance. Identification of potential areas and modalities of collaboration with other donors, such as the British Department for International Development (DfID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and an array of international NGOs (among others CARE and Save the Children) is underway. For many years there has been cooperation with international financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), or the World Bank (IBRD).

139. Apart from the LCG (Local Consultative Group), other fora of cooperation are the Local Consultative Group Executive Committee (LCGEC), and the annual Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF). Within LCG, partnerships are strengthened in the sub-groups, but the outcome did not yet seem to reach the expected level in terms of cost-sharing and co-ordinated efforts.

140. Bilateral donors such as the EC already support important WFP programmes. However, in the team's judgement, current arrangements for donor coordination and multi-stakeholder participation could be further improved, if WFP took the initiative for enhanced collaboration in various fora, such as, for example, LCG. LCG, in particular, must be considered a key prerequisite for enhanced partnership.

Local Government Agencies

141. Effective implementation partnerships with local government agencies are crucial for the success of WFP interventions. However, local GoB agencies usually lack appropriate decision-

³⁶ The EC, initially sceptical towards food distribution, still assisted the VGD (Vulnerable Group Development) and gradually changed their view towards the impact of food supply as a contribution to food security and development: Although donors considered distributing cash less complicated than the distributing food grain, the risk of a mismanagement of funds difficult to trace back seemed greater. Because beneficiaries, too, tended to prefer food grain, the EU later opted for food. This influenced other donors such as Australian and British development assistance.

making capacities, and their accountability is sometimes low.³⁷ This can be partly explained by the shortage of well trained professionals willing to take on – less than attractive – field assignments. Examples of poor coordination and subsequent failure of measures can be found in WFP reports, such as the Monthly Report of WFP Rangpur Regional Office (March 2004³⁸).

142. Time, and proper synchronisation of planning and intervention cycles are also crucial factors, as exemplified by various maintenance programmes' abortion after WFP support had run out. In one site, the polder maintenance stagnated due to the lack of timely initiative by the responsible local GoB agency, resulting in increased economic and social vulnerability of around 300,000 people living in areas surrounded by three polders. WFP's phase-out signals were not clear to the GoB. And the local GoB institutions were not efficient enough to convey the urgency of immediate take-over by the GoB of the activities that were formerly assisted by WFP.

143. This example is indicative of a largely non-accountable bureaucracy in the country, which is not efficient enough to address the needs of the people in a timely and appropriate fashion. BWDB officials confirmed similar cases with other polders in the locality and in the country. Local stakeholders claimed that a lack of accountability also pertained to the local GoB authorities, i.e. the BWDB officials. **Non-accountability can result in delays or non-conveyance of messages to the central authorities** of the GoB/BWDB regarding potentially serious situations, which can affect people's livelihoods and the environment. Damages that can occur after the withdrawal of WFP assistance are underestimated. In this way, the rather bureaucratic system in the country stands in the way of efficiency and sustainability.

144. WFP has created a conducive institutional and policy mechanism to promote partnerships and use this as a tool for implementation. Targeting the most vulnerable, focusing on women and female adolescents in need, reaching equality of women and men and reducing women's economic handicaps became a mandate of the cooperating NGOs. WFP should now create an even more conducive environment for the partnering NGOs to integrate these principles and the "blend of their mandate" to ensure the sustainability of the achievements under the EDP. **The basis of sustainability is a shift from "project" approach to ownership approach.** To this end, WFP should develop a communication strategy for creating greater ownership by the GoB and other partners of the philosophy, concepts and achievements of WFP interventions and to mobilise resources from other donors.

³⁷ The WFP CO tries to level out deficits in the decision-making capacities and in the accountability of GoB activities through training, advisory services, sharing of information and the procurement of hardware. WFP activities assist NGOs charged by the GoB to manage projects. This enables the NGOs to improve work in the field and supply faster information and data needed by the GoB for decision-making.

³⁸ FFA work was started in Kurigram with an advance payment to the workers (except Chilmar Upazilla). Elsewhere payment was still due. In Kaliganj Upazilla of Lalmonirhat district the earthwork for some road schemes was started without the approval of the schemes from the IGED HQ. Subsequently the schemes were not approved and the workers did not receive any wages for their work. Claims by the WFP Rangpur Regional Office that record keeping was not done properly in a district at Sadar Upazilla could not be verified for the projects visited.

Key Findings on Implementation and Strategic Partnerships

- WFP is involved in numerous fora for the co-ordination of activities and entertains a number of strategic partnerships with UN agencies, donors and NGOs both for programming and implementation. Partnership with the UN agencies and bilateral donors is guided by the UNDAF and the CCA. Specific ties exist on field level, with line agencies and NGOs that have clear roles and responsibilities, and generally function satisfactorily. Partnerships were significantly outscaled in the past years.
- The level of partnerships with the national NGOs, especially with those working at the grassroots level, is appropriate from the point of view of efficient implementation and sustainability of WFP projects.
- The Local Consultative Group (LCG) is the central forum for creating partnerships among multilateral and bilateral agencies. In terms of cost-sharing, sub-group partnerships yet need to prove their value. More pro-activeness on the part of WFP in resource mobilisation through cost-sharing with the bilaterals, and better reporting on resource utilisation should be tried.
- While there is a broad and successful level of partnership with local GoB agencies, sometimes project success is put at risk by a lack of decision-making capacities and an accountability deficit of GoB agencies.
- To further improve ownership of the GoB and other partners of the philosophy, concepts and achievements of WFP interventions, and to mobilise resources from other donors, WFP may want to elaborate a special communication strategy.

3.2.2 Stakeholder Participation and Ownership

145. An important recommendation of the EDP is to use participatory approaches in order to understand beneficiaries' needs, involve beneficiaries in identifying activities suited to their situation, and obtain their feedback on results. Stakeholder participation and ownership are also prerequisites for rapid and sustainable implementation of the Programme after the retreat of donor assistance. Major stakeholders include GoB organisations (who benefit from the capacity-building that accompanies the implementation of the CPs), NGOs, donors, beneficiaries and the local communities. The level of participation and ownership will vary according to the range and level of intervention of each stakeholder.

146. **Country programmes proper are the product of a participatory process**, through consultations with governments, donors, other UN agencies and NGOs at central and regional level, where programme objectives, activities and approaches are discussed. However, the discussions in the planning process do not include people at project level.

NGOs' Role and Performance in Ensuring Participation

147. NGOs in Bangladesh are the catalytic agents for economic and human resource development at the grassroots level. Their involvement is inevitable if the most vulnerable are to participate in the mainstream development process. In line with the EDP's requirements, the I-PRSP (Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) affirms the role of NGOs as providers of relevant services in rural and peri-urban areas, both as sources of alternative financing and as mobilising agents.³⁹ The GoB and donor support to the NGOs aims at supplementing the government's delivery system to reach the poor, and to have NGOs play a greater role in raising awareness for

³⁹ Bangladesh. A National Strategy for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction. Economic Relations Division. Ministry of Finance. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. April 2002.

the importance of local level participatory planning and integration of local-level development projects with those at national level.⁴⁰

148. The nature of NGO participation may vary from project to project. This is particularly the case in the **School Feeding Project**, where NGOs distribute biscuits delivered to them from regional warehouses. The NGOs are responsible for preparing delivery plans, checking attendance and distribution, inspecting the schools for good storage practices and hygiene and sanitation and for reports to WFP. Principally, the SFP has two types of NGO interventions. Apart from the more general type of interventions that extends to all kinds of schools, there is another type that relates to schools that are sustained by the NGO (BRAC) itself. Here, BRAC acts as the recipient and distributor of the High Energy Biscuits for the students at their schools, meaning that they act as a kind of agent charged by WFP to perform tasks concerning school feeding.

149. In **Vulnerable Group Development** and **Integrated Food Security** the NGOs select the most vulnerable individuals of the communities and coach them up to their 'graduation'. Their mandate also entails continued support to the people graduated after the retreat of WFP assistance. This support can take the form of advisory services to the new participating members of NGO projects or else the form of loans for continuing or expanding businesses of the newly self-employed. The NGO projects, however, depend on the cash-flow of the NGOs concerned and their capability of mobilising resources in future too.

150. In **Food for Assets** projects (a component of IFS) **User Committees** withdraw the quantities of wheat to which they are entitled directly from the Local Storage Depots (LSD) and distribute them among the participants. Participants plan, implement and monitor their projects. District Officials learn about improved project design and adopt innovative concepts, such as Users Committees and awareness training for new projects. The success is closely correlated to participation, since this mobilises savings, removes capital constraints, and provides a chance to diversify economic activities.

151. In key informant interviews and group discussions with the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), the District Executive Engineer expressed a rather positive view with regard to the present User Committee and its authority: "Many people expected that this approach would create conflicts, but our two years of experience show that it is possible to work directly with ultra-poor participants in a participatory way and to empower them to run their own projects. In the FFA local politicians have an advisory role." Due to their direct involvement in all steps of programming, **participants benefit from the FFA to a greater extent than from previous WFP-assisted projects**, according to LGED officials. It was argued that the needs of the poor were addressed more immediately because they propose the working schemes of FFW and the content of the IGA training themselves.

152. The partner NGOs, with a few exceptions, were found to be positive towards the concept of interventions and about grassroots activities. In principle the Team found the NGOs and CBOs competent and professional in discharging their duties. One example is the RDSR in the North of the country, which plays a leading role among the NGOs active in the area. Well staffed and well equipped, this NGO performs successfully. Streamlining further the internal management systems of various NGO (e.g. through enhanced monitoring) could further increase the NGO contributions' impact and acceptance by the target group. In this regard, transparency must be considered crucial.

⁴⁰ The Fifth Five Year Plan 1997–2002 envisages an active coalition of the government and the NGOs in development so that the full potential of the NGOs can be tapped in a cost-effective manner. NGOs (and the private sector, PS) would increase GO-NGO-PS competition in service delivery and improve efficiency and accountability in public and private organisations and institutions. An example was reported in the field where an NGO established a special school for drop-outs.

153. Yet the participatory approach demands more resources in the form of time and field staff of the implementing partners in all phases of implementation. Results can hardly be demonstrated according to a predefined plan, and a **high degree of flexibility according to the specific needs of the participants/target group is a precondition for achieving results**. According to discussions with WFP staff, this approach demands more capacity-building support for IPs especially in terms of funding for staff and training in PRA methods, process monitoring and reporting, food handling and distribution.

154. The target beneficiaries proved to be fairly educated in certain complex social issues. This can be taken as a success of capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives by the implementing and partnering NGOs (and, lastly effective WFP support in NGO involvement). As regards exit strategies of WFP assistance, however, it appeared that **sometimes beneficiaries were not familiar with the need for self-sustaining structures after WFP retreats**. Instead, they strongly expected to enjoy WFP assistance over a longer period of time. Involved NGOs may have failed to communicate exit strategies to the beneficiaries, or they themselves had not been enabled to carry on with some level of continued assistance.

155. After graduation the participants are involved in NGOs' mainstream activities, to ensure their sustained employment and income. While the NGOs are supposed to assure the beneficiaries of their continued assistance after graduation, this may not be true in all cases. There is an apprehension that not all beneficiaries are confident that they will receive the needed support from the NGOs after graduation. The Team gained the impression that the NGOs need to be more transparent and specific regarding their support to the graduated beneficiaries.

Key Findings on Stakeholder Participation and Ownership

- Bangladesh's Five Year Plan provides for close cooperation in the government and public sectors. Participation of NGOs and the private sector is regarded as a means for improving service delivery, efficiency and accountability in public and private organisations. Concerning grassroots-level cooperation in WFP projects, NGOs were positive about the effects of joint interventions.
- The macro-, meso- and micro-level consultations revealed that the target beneficiaries have an operational level of partnership and ownership in all WFP activities. The Team found a very good level of involvement of the target people in the programme. Some activities draw extensively on community participation. The results of beneficiary involvement have been positively assessed by project staff.
- The beneficiaries themselves regarded their participation as a major advantage and even as a prerequisite for effective implementation according to their needs.
- NGOs succeed fairly well in establishing market and administrative linkages that make the target beneficiaries' future IGAs successful. This is of special value if one considers the weak social status of women, the majority of the target beneficiaries.
- Ownership by beneficiaries would also entail precise information by NGOs about the duration and follow-up of WFP's assistance, about exit strategies, and – together with this - about the kind and time span of NGO support. In this respect there may be a lack of transparency to beneficiaries, which hampers their empowerment and ownership.

3.2.3 Progress (and Changes) in Demonstrating Results

156. WFP seeks to improve food supply and to provide for procurement of non-food items. Efficiency depends on **standardised monitoring procedures**. To make these an integral part of WFP/partner measures, appropriate training is required. Results Based Management (RBM)

provides a basis for evaluating stakeholder performance, outcome and impact, achievements, overall relevance, significance, cost-effectiveness and sustainability of programmes and projects, and since RBM results are to be regularly published, the progress of development efforts will be documented. RBM also helps refine programme planning.

157. According to WFP officials, RBM was practiced in the past, but not in a systematic way. To overcome this deficit – and with donors increasingly demanding a thorough use of RBM – the WFP CO began to establish a (CO based) unit two years ago, responsible for upgrading the quality and intensity of monitoring efforts. During 2001 – 2002 WFP, assisted by GTZ, **elaborated a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation System (M&E)**. In the form of a Logical Framework exercise and a comprehensive description of tools to be adopted (questionnaires, checklists for data collection, report formats) and used for all kinds of WFP intervention, it provides a valuable handbook for planning, monitoring and evaluation. WFP involved counterparts in monitoring and hired consultants for resolving special problems faced by the CO.

158. The WFP Country Office embarked on strengthening the monitoring capacity of GoB authorities and NGOs involved in its activities. Monitoring efforts of WFP are backed by donors (e.g. DFID, EC, Australia). This complies with the aims of the CP to concentrate on improvements in food security and the status of ultra-poor through a decentralised field based approach to monitoring and evaluation. From 2004, new questionnaires for monitoring⁴¹ provide further important information.

159. In 2003, the WFP Country Office monitored thirty-six percent of the total sites (13,818). Compared with 2002, monitoring visits were increased. To identify bottlenecks and inadequacies the CO introduced comprehensive **Monitoring Checklist Reports**. All cooperating NGOs in WFP-assisted projects were informed about the main results. Longitudinal surveys and Participatory Learning Exercises (PLE) were used as instruments to assess the impact of projects assisted by food supplies.

160. Before the IFS was introduced in 2002, lessons learnt from the Rural Development and the Vulnerable Group Development activities had been elaborated, to guide the conception of the new projects. In the IFS pilot phase and after, **continuous process monitoring was carried out to identify any weaknesses and to initiate necessary adaptations of the methodology and operational guidelines**. Data collection tools (checklists and questionnaires) for process monitoring and beneficiary contact monitoring were used. Today, WFP field officers visit about 50% of the IFS intervention sites (randomly selected) each year. WFP's sub-offices forward monthly reports to Dhaka for further analysis.

161. In the first two years of the current CP the Project Implementation Unit of the FSVGD Project established a Management Information System. At the end of 2003, maintenance of the various databases was still required.⁴²

162. In 2004 the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives issued "Operational Guidelines for the Planning and Implementation of the World Food Programme-assisted Integrated Food Security Programmes". These Guidelines provide (p. 23) for the PMU/LGED to cooperate with WFP, NGOs and Food Security Committees at district, upazilla and union level in monitoring and reporting. Monthly reports are to be edited. The sample focuses on physical and money-related (quantitative) input (food consigned, cash paid, services rendered) and output (e.g. km of road constructed, m³ of earth moved) of Food for Assets

⁴¹ "ECW (Enhanced Commitment to Women) Implementation: Food for Training (FFI)" and "ECW Design Self-Assessment: Food for Work (FFW), Nutrition, Relief/General Food Distribution (GFD)", 2004.

⁴² DWA, MWCA, WFP, EC, Food Security for VGD Women and their Dependants (FSVGD), 5th Six-monthly Progress Report, July-December 2003, p 7.

projects and compares the achievements with the relevant plan. **The form included in the Guideline does not contain any reference to questions of quality and impact.**⁴³

163. WFP monitors the qualitative performance of the Women Training Centres (WTCs). A field survey, called “Ensuring Appropriate Receipt of Food Rations by Programme Participants” was piloted in two districts with first promising results. A question of great interest is the kind of training achieved in WTCs and whether the know-how was successfully used in practice. However, a systematic follow-up of how far the training actually improved livelihoods has not yet been achieved on a geographically satisfactory scale.

164. All in all, it became apparent that monitoring of outputs should be complemented by quality oriented outcome and impact monitoring, and be performed over a protracted period, at least three years. In order to arrive at well-based conclusions, the monitoring process should exceed the time needed to perform the CP activities.

165. The Team gained the following impression from the demonstration of results:

- a) Donors, the GoB, NGOs and international organisations put emphasis on community based planning and project management. There is a shift of responsibilities from Project Implementation Committees (PICs) to User Committees. The achievements are negatively affected by bureaucratic delays and delays of payments. NGOs complained that a lack of support for field supervision affected data collection and monitoring in the field.⁴⁴ They needed vehicles and/or cash for transport. Recently WFP assisted by supplying motorcycles.
- b) **Introducing RBM at grassroots level is still a slow process**, as monitoring reports and interviews reveal. Comprehensive training (capacity building) and supply of more technical equipment is needed. However, first steps have been taken. The approach is in line with the Enabling Development Policy.
- c) RBM is departing from comprehensive baseline surveys. Before 2002, baseline surveys were not tools normally used by WFP for project preparation. **After 2002, WFP became involved in the preparation of baseline surveys in the 2003/2004 cycle.** As a solid basis, WFP organised the development of a comprehensive M&E system including Logical Frameworks, Checklists and Questionnaires. Reporting requirements of GoB and NGOs regarding achievements in the implementation of the VGD project were elaborated.
- d) The quantitative monitoring of the Vulnerable Group Development, the School Feeding Education Project, Food for Assets, Community Nutrition Initiatives, Training and Nutrition Centres, as well as Food for Work projects is well-prepared and in line with EDP principles. Gaps are still to be observed regarding qualitative results and impacts. The School Feeding project does not yet supply health-related data, since in many cases the respective equipment is not available. However, people take to self-help, e.g. they build the tools for measuring the children’s height themselves, and homemade tapes are substituted for official ones. Training and Nutrition Centres report the numbers of trained women. However, **whether the training has in fact led to successful and sustainable income generating activities is not systematically followed up over a mid-term period.** Recently, impact assessments were initiated, but only a few are available, which do not yet cover the whole country.

⁴³ Impact is defined along these lines: community infrastructure developed; resources not fully used activated; income earning skills improved; women leadership developed; occupational diversification achieved; household food security improved; literacy rate among women improved; access to primary education increased.

⁴⁴ For example in the Food Security for Vulnerable Group Development Women and their Dependants (FSVGD) Project the minimum supervision and monitoring equipment for field staff is a bicycle (or other means of transport), bag, umbrella, raincoat. If such equipment is not available, monitoring and evaluation at grassroots level are hampered.

Key Findings on Demonstrating Results

- Recent monitoring activities employ **Checklist Reports, longitudinal surveys** and **Participatory Learning Exercises** as tools/instruments. 36 % of the total sites were visited in 2003.
- Suitable M&E Systems exist and are in use, but they are still to be complemented by additional questions and information, the pertinent form, and processing methodologies. Social and socio-economic data should be elaborated and monitored more.
- Additional equipment and training is needed to enable government authorities and NGOs to use the M&E systems introduced properly.
- Though but one instrument for demonstrating results, Results Based Monitoring can act as a catalyst for improvements as it touches on most central aspects of demonstrating results such as regular inventoring, analysis and publication of data.
- Results Based Monitoring is gradually being adopted and used by the institutions and organisations of the GoB, the communities, and donors. However, a systematic analysis of the qualitative impacts does not yet work. This makes the elaboration of comprehensive evaluations difficult, since necessary data are not yet available or not yet processed by WFP for a geographically representative area.
- To introduce systematic RBM the Country Office has established a special unit. A handbook was published as a basis. WFP involved counterparts in monitoring and hired consultants for resolving special problems. Monthly reports are to be published, and operational guidelines were put in place early this year. However, in these, quantitative output still reigns over questions of quality and impact.
- WFP has begun to upgrade the data-collection system and trains specialists at all levels, who will be responsible for processing the data collected. Baseline surveys that are urgently needed will be finished during this year and contribute to the elaboration of reliable programme and project studies and evaluations. The work will help strengthen the foundations of plans.
- NGOs are to ensure that beneficiaries are included into their mainstream activities, with a special emphasis on female-headed households. WFP needs to monitor that this mandate is properly accomplished by the NGOs. A systematic follow-up of how far the training actually improves livelihoods has not yet been achieved on a geographically satisfactory scale.

3.2.4 Gender Mainstreaming

166. The EDP is committed to developing gender equality and women's access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. This is of high relevance in a country in which most rural women live and work in the confines of the extended family home and compound and, statistically, face a much higher risk of physical harm as a consequence of their marginalisation.

167. WFP Country Office makes comprehensive efforts to mainstream gender issues in all its activities. This effort has brought about manifest results within the organisation. A CO gender team, consisting of a chairperson, two international staff and two national staff members, was installed in 2002 to guide the implementation of the WFP agenda on its commitments to women and to advise on gender mainstreaming in the various programme components. The gender team creates awareness of the revision and renewal of project agreements and other key documents to enhance aspects of gender mainstreaming. The committee disseminates information and organises training workshops for WFP staff on gender-related issues. The composition of the WFP staff in Bangladesh is increasingly gender-balanced: 40% out of a total of 151 in-house staff members are female, and 90% of the field officers are female. In most cases the Country Office M&E system contains gender-disaggregated monitoring indicators. The WFP CO team is aware

that there are areas for further improvement with regard to expanding the view of gender beyond the programme targeting mainly women, and extending gender mainstreaming efforts beyond its own organisation to NGOs and GoB partners. The CO currently participating in a baseline study on ‘enhanced commitments to women policy’, which is going to provide data for future reviews.

Measures Taken at Project and Local Level

168. With all activities except School Feeding primarily focusing on ultra-poor women, there is an apparent gender imbalance in favour of women. Despite – or just because of – this these efforts **have a limited potential for provoking sustaining changes as the almost exclusive concentration on women leaves out men**, who are crucial partners for any changes in mentality and gender roles. In this way, even the VGD’s inclusion of legal rights issues as part of its curriculum (awareness-training cycle) must remain limited in impact. Discussions with the WFP staff revealed that alternative approaches are being considered in order to reach the male half of society – no matter of what age. One example is family sessions in which husbands and other male decision makers could become involved. This is currently envisaged but not yet on offer.

169. To ensure that women are equally involved in food distribution committees and in other programme-related local bodies, participatory approaches were introduced in the selection of participants and activities (e.g. IFS). **Women’s membership was made a formal requirement**, laid down in project agreements and implementation guidelines in order to **increase female representation in local bodies** like the Food Security Assistance Committee, the School Management Committee and others.

Key Findings on Gender Mainstreaming

- Gender mainstreaming is a priority of the Country Office. To this end the following measures were put in place at various levels: a CO gender team with a clearly defined work programme, workshops raising sensitivity for gender-related questions for all staff members, and a generally gender-sensitive staff policy. Gender issues are addressed in key documents (e.g. project agreements, CP) and in the M&E system. Participatory measures are introduced at project implementation level and there are formal requirements in agreements with IPs on the representation of women in local bodies. WFP staff generally acknowledge the need to expand the view of gender beyond projects confined to women as beneficiaries and beyond WFP also to NGO and GoB partners.
- The participatory approach pursued in the IFS is the most promising one in terms of empowering participating women. This approach, however, demands much from the partner NGOs in terms of implementation resources. WFP generally acknowledges that this approach demands more support in terms of capacity-building of IPs.
- The CP’s prevailing gender imbalance in favour of women is not apt to provoke sustaining changes in current power relations. Therefore WFP is considering at least partial inclusion of men – e.g. via family sessions – in the projects.

3.2.5 HIV/AIDS Mainstreaming

170. Since the adoption of the EDP in 1999, which did not yet deal explicitly with the pandemic, WFP has taken the repercussions of the pandemic into account in its developmental and humanitarian programmes. In January 2003, a **WFP policy for HIV/AIDS** was adopted by the Executive Board. It is characterised by the use of food aid to complement and scale up existing government, United Nations and NGO/ CBO partner activities in the prevention, mitigation and care of HIV-infected and affected individuals and families. WFP’s **‘minimum package**

approach entails mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS prevention into all activities, which WFP currently tries to pursue, e.g. by integrating HIV/AIDS issues in the training curricula. The proposed approach is comprehensive and relevant.

171. UN Agencies cooperate in a related UN theme group to elaborate a joint programme to fight HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh, taking into account country-specific needs and national priorities. Since October 2003, WFP Bangladesh has been a member of the UN Theme Group and of the Expanded Theme Group. **It has appointed a HIV/AIDS focal point.** WFP is also active in the elaboration of a HIV/AIDS workplace programme for UN staff in Bangladesh, which is currently being implemented.

Key Findings on HIV/AIDS Mainstreaming

- WFP's approach to HIV/AIDS is based on engaging in partnerships with other UN agencies and implementing partner agencies/departments, and on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS considerations in all training curricula of its current activities in the Country Programme. This approach is comprehensive and relevant.
- In compliance with the WFP policy on HIV/AIDS and the national HIV/AIDS policy the Country Office in Bangladesh focuses on prevention. Since 2003 WFP Bangladesh has been a member of the UN Theme group and of the Expanded Theme Group and has appointed a HIV/AIDS focal point.

3.2.6 Resourcing⁴⁵

172. The current Country Programme 2001 (January)-2005 (December) assists four million beneficiaries each year, supplying 645,000 tons of basic and 90,000 tons of supplementary food from WFP side, 500,000 tons from bilateral sources, and 300,000 tons as a contribution of the GoB. Cereals add up to 1,509,000 tons, Fortified Blended Food to 25,000 tons and Other Food to 1,500 tons.⁴⁶ Total foodstuffs amount to 1,535,598 tons.

173. **Forty percent of the food resources are provided by WFP, thirty percent by bilateral donors and thirty percent by the GoB⁴⁷** (the latter supplies 60,000 tons of wheat at a cash equivalent of US\$ 10 million). Bilateral cash is provided by Canada and the USA for establishing Milling Fortification Units (8 exist, 14 are planned), and by the EU and Australia for capacity-building activities rendered to the GoB and NGOs.

174. **Non-food resources** such as modern office equipment (overhead projectors, beamers, copying machines) to NGOs and government departments are provided by bilateral donors e.g. Canadian International Development Agency assistance for fortified 'atta' mills, SDC, GTZ for training materials and EU for other non-food items. The distribution of non-food resources gained importance especially in the field of backing NGOs and government authorities, e.g. by establishing modern electronic data processing and office equipment. **The process of institution building is hampered, however, by limited non-food resources and cash.**

⁴⁵ For more details on resourcing cf. chapter 2.2.1 ("Evolution of CP interventions since 1997").

⁴⁶ Numbers are rounded.

⁴⁷ "Bangladesh Today" (20th May 2004) reported that the National Economic Council had approved a revision of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) from Tk 20,300,000 originally allocated (around USD 346,600) to Tk 19,000,000 (around USD 324,400). **This has reduced the number of projects from 1,163 to 1,104 in the fiscal year.** Fifty-three projects, worth Tk 250,000 (USD 4268), were allocated under the revenue budget. At the time of in-country data collection it was not yet clear if and how far the contribution of the GoB to WFP-assisted projects would be influenced.

175. For the time being no solution can be identified since most donors do not feel ready to provide more cash.⁴⁸ Donors tend to prefer exports of surplus stocks over provision of cash. Likewise, there is an interest of donors in backing their own agricultural production by buying food grain from their national market.

176. The GoB is very interested in development oriented and development-enabling activities. However, **its considerable contributions cannot be expected to be extended much in the near future.** There is hope is that the relatively sound development of the national economy will ultimately lead to still greater involvement of the GoB and help it take over more and more of the commitment of the donors, the international and national aid organisations assisting so far.

177. As the 40 % of food resources earmarked by WFP for providing food assistance are insecure over the medium and long term, there is no way for WFP CO to reckon with a specific volume of resources in the long run. This obviously entails a host of problems, not least regarding the sustainability of activities.

Key Findings on Resourcing

- The GoB contributes a significant share of food to the Country Programme 2001 – 2005, but at present the GoB has reached the limits of its supply capacity. In 2004, a cut in the Annual Development Programme has already led to a reduction in numbers from 1,163 projects to 1,104.
- WFP strengthens the capacities of NGOs and GoB institutions by providing non-food items (e.g. modern electronic data processing and office equipment). Such items are essential for the success of WFP interventions. However, limited non-food resources and cash threaten to hamper the process of institution building.
- In a mid-term perspective, neither donors nor the GoB seem capable of or ready to put more monetary resources into food aid. This emphasizes the need for self-sustaining structures and the deliberate promotion of project sustainability beyond the phasing out of donor support.

3.3 THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE EDP AT THE LOCAL/COUNTRY LEVEL

3.3.1 Introduction

178. This chapter presents key-findings obtained at the level of three individual projects: Vulnerable Group Development – VGD; Integrated Food Security – IFS; School Feeding Programme – SFP. The chapter contributes specifically to the answering of Evaluation Questions 3 (Results at Local and Country Level) and 4 (Sustainability of Results). It concludes with a synthesis of project-specific findings, addressing the criteria “efficiency”, “coherence” (with EDP 5 strategic objectives), and “sustainability” in separate sections.

⁴⁸ To make donors inclined to funding, the Country Programme is handed out to cooperating donors, and great number of CO publications are used to depict Bangladesh’s situation and the country’s special humanitarian problems. WFP improves the visibility of food-assisted projects, maintains close contacts with different stakeholders, to organisations, institutions and representations, and foreign states agencies in Dhaka. NGOs are addressed as well. WFP also organises visits to projects for donor delegations, visitors and media representatives. This may serve as a good example of institutional communication to be followed by partner agencies and donors.

3.3.2 Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)

Main Outputs

179. **Scope and Scale:** In the present CP 2001-2005, VGD (exclusively addressing ultra-poor women) reaches out to 1.5 million participants, and 7.5 million beneficiaries⁴⁹ in its component Union Parishad Vulnerable Group Development (UPVGD), and to another 90,000 participants and 450,000 beneficiaries its component Women Training Centres (WTC).

180. Multiple criteria are used to select VGD participants: age (childbearing age), land ownership (less than 0.15 acres i.e. functionally landless) and income (extremely low and irregular, or a family income of less than Taka 300 per head per month). The target women involve those who either make their living as daily or casual labourers and hence lack productive assets, or those who are widowed, separated, divorced or deserted, or whose husbands are disabled.

181. **Mechanisms and Means of Intervention:** As outlined in 2.2.2, VGD combines two years' food aid with development support (skills training, awareness-raising on social, legal, health and nutrition issues, basic literacy and numeracy training and small monthly savings and credit support). In the 2003-2004 cycle, UPVGD women receive wheat or fortified wheat flour, while the WTC component provides women trainees with monthly wheat rations over one year combined with training in marketable income generating skills and awareness-raising about social and economic issues. VGD thus incorporates the policy of 'enabling development' by focussing on holistic human resources development. Food aid is not simply regarded as relief, but as an "enabler" in this process.

182. The project seeks to develop women's capacity, so as to enable them to become regular members of NGO development programmes. Once graduated from the VGD cycle, women gain access to credit more easily, may launch income generating activities, and may even hope to accumulate savings for further investments.

Main Outcomes

183. **Improved nourishment:** Women participating in the WTC component were found to have a higher calorie intake, a finding which is confirmed by existing studies (Hashemi, Tufts).

184. **Increase of income:** Results from a previous impact evaluation⁵⁰ indicate that women's monthly earnings in 1997 were as low as 310 Taka. By 1999, this figure had more than doubled – with women's monthly income reaching 810 Taka. This may be understood as proof of the success of WTC's income generating activities. Women use their additional income for purchasing personal belongings, for investments in income generating activities, and for savings. The material status of women has been markedly improved.

185. **Improved livelihood conditions with respect to health and sanitation:** In 1997, 76% of women consulted modern medical practitioners. By 1999, this rate had reached 86%. However, the impact of WFP interventions cannot be reliably gauged, since other factors (such as increased numbers of local health care workers and enhanced accessibility) may contribute to it. Sanitary toilets were readily adopted.

186. **Enhanced capacities:** VGD provides training in various skills and crafts, enabling women to engage successfully in income generating activities. VGD further supports women with the marketing of products, e.g. through outlets in the nation's capital. However, a number of shortfalls and remaining challenges were observed during the field visits, which call for further discussion. The contextual scope of training offered is relatively narrow due to a shortage of

⁴⁹ In the context of this paragraph, participants are those people who are registered as such, while 'beneficiaries' is used in the sense that measures reach out beyond the actual participants (including family members and/or dependents).

⁵⁰ IES-WTC-97/98/2/2000) VGD Projects, WTCs, Impact Evaluation of 197/98 WTC, Women: Round 2 Study, p.11.

qualified trainers and resources. Higher value items, which are sought after particularly in bigger cities (such as dyed or printed cloth), are not yet adequately represented in the scope of training.

Projected Impacts

187. **Awareness-raising:** Social awareness has been improved. Changes of attitudes relate to girls' education, marital age, and working outside the home. Women become more confident and assertive through their interaction with other women and men involved in the projects.

188. **Empowerment for self-representation:** WFP-assisted projects share anecdotal evidence of empowerment, but few studies have been undertaken to analyse the actual impact on the empowerment of ultra-poor rural women. Different changes may take place as a consequence of implemented activities: changes in the perception of a woman (of her individuality, interest and value, but also changes in the perception of her condition and worth by other persons); material changes (changes in access to and control over material resources); relational changes (changes in contractual agreements and bargaining power in various types of relationships); and cognitive changes (changes in the level of knowledge, skills, and awareness of wider environment).

189. The series of previous impact evaluations of the VGD activity confirm that former VGD participants raise their food intake, acquire some simple furniture and other personal belongings, and are more involved in diversified income generating activities which enables them to increase their monthly income.⁵¹ These studies concentrate mainly on the material and economic aspect of women's empowerment.

190. The Tufts University study (2001) also addressed benefits of participation in terms of 'less tangible changes'⁵². It pinned down impacts on women's decision making responsibilities within the household, on self-confidence, on women's status and gender relations in the home, on family relationships and domestic violence, and on women's involvement and status in the community. **Studies like this are a prerequisite for obtaining more solid and precise indications of the changes attained.** More efforts are needed so that these impacts can be assessed independently.

191. In the field women reported to have gained more influence in household and family-related decision-making, apart from improving their material status. In all discussions with former VGD participants it was claimed that the beneficiaries had improved their social status (e.g. less violence against them, less strict dowry payments). However, with regard to the *social changes* the Evaluation Team had some feeling that these 'anecdotes' might be verbal statements only based on the project's training content. This will yet have to be verified.

192. **"Graduation" to NGO-membership:** Between 70 % and 80 % of women participating in VGD activities successfully "graduate" to NGO membership. The remainder either declined to participate in NGO activities, or were not eligible for socio-economic reasons or the NGOs' limited absorption capacities.

193. **Enhanced socio-economic status:** Findings from the country visit indicate that training, awareness-raising and integration into activities of partner NGOs improve the target population's socio-economic status. This improvement is marked by the target group's ability to send their children to school, enhanced management capacities and better household expenditure planning, enhanced knowledge of social and legal issues such as dowry, divorce, social justice, gender equity, etc. A 70 percent majority of the graduated women reported better livelihood conditions in terms of family income, employment, education and health. In accordance with the

⁵¹ e.g. WFP: impact evaluation 1992/94; WFP: impact evaluation 1997/98.

⁵² An important result reported by many women is that they feel a greater fulfilment and are more aware. Involvement in the programme acted as a 'change agent' in reducing women's dependence on their husbands and other male kin. The programme activities brought women out of their home to interact with other women and with men. Women had more confidence after participating in the programme. Women who participated in the complete cycle, reported greater social support within the family and community (Tufts University 2001).

improved overall situation, also land ownership and access to arable land have been improved. These findings are consistent with the previous impact evaluations of 1992/94 and 1997/98 which concentrated mainly on the material and economic aspect of women's empowerment.

194. **Enhanced mobility:** Participants display higher mobility, and were generally found to be more enterprising than poor women outside the project's context.

Unintended Effects

195. The ability to take risks is an important element in the success of the mainstreaming/graduation strategy. **Some VGD participants are reluctant to become NGO members, or take loans.** This holds true particularly in flood-prone and riverbank erosion areas in the Rajshahi division. Focus group discussions revealed that they had previously taken loans from an NGO (BRAC) to buy goats, but had lost the animals during the annual flood, and thus had difficulty in paying back the loans. The problem of scarcity of fodder and high losses of livestock due to floods is recurrent. On the one hand, there is a need for other public works programmes such as regular repair and maintenance of embankments on the side of the government. On the other hand, **NGOs could be encouraged to initiate group ventures for setting-up innovative non-farm enterprises and other agro based activities.** NGO loans in some areas seem to focus only on livestock, particularly goat rearing. More participatory exercises could help find out the communities' needs.

196. Due to the risks mentioned, many current and former 'VGD women', particularly in flood-prone areas, expressed their eagerness to work for cash rather than start an IGA with loans. The Team would recommend putting diversified options in place for those VGD women who find it too risky to participate in micro-credit-programmes of NGOs.

197. Today, women's graduation means NGO membership and access to micro-credit, skills development, and access to initiatives such as savings and insurances. Sustained income-generation should, however, be monitored and the measures be amended as time allows. This is particularly important for the poorest women with little risk-taking ability. It would of course require even more planning and collaboration between WFP and the GoB. Arguably, **a gap is left in terms of employment-generation schemes by the government,** with scope for assistance by WFP.

198. Some participants complained about poor training material, and about limited practical relevance of the skills imparted. Where products are marketed through NGO-operated outlets, producer prices are about one third of the retail prices in urban areas. **Women producers are quite dependent on marketing channels provided by the NGO, due to lack of alternatives.** Some producers, however, might contribute to marketing problems by exceeding their assigned quota. Access to investment capital constitutes another weak spot of the programme.

199. A number of critical issues were already raised in the impact evaluation of 1997/98. The training was concentrated on tailoring and embroidery, and was not based enough on local demand and marketability. There were too few trainers, and often they lacked technical skills. One of the major problems in utilising the training was insufficient availability of capital. WFP tried to address the problems, but faced similar problems like the NGOs involved. Sometimes neither WFP nor the NGOs concerned were able to change the situation.

200. The lack of well prepared trainers should be overcome by a comprehensive "training of trainers programme" and the hiring of more trainers, a difficult task in remote areas. Part of the resources earmarked for assisting trainees might be transferred to this end. Appropriate agreements with the NGOs involved in training could be fixed in the contracts stipulated between WFP and the NGOs. At the same time, as outlined elsewhere, the training of trainers could be "standardised" up to a certain degree.

201. Although the VGD cycle foresees a total of 150 hours (84 hours income generating activities, 66 hours awareness training plus 24 months brushing-up and follow-up training), the professional preparation for income generating activities sometimes seemed to be too short. Sometimes only three days remain for the actual preparation for IGA.

202. In VGD's Women Training Centres component, the remuneration VGD trainers (i.e. community women) receive from participating NGOs (after they have themselves been trained in skills like embroidery) appears too low.

Key Findings on VGD

- VGD interventions focus on poverty-stricken women, who constitute one of society's most vulnerable groups.
- VGD pursues an integrated approach, combining food aid with capacity building and empowerment of the target group. Food aid is functionally subordinate to a holistic vision of socio-economic development.
- VGD encourages women to become involved in "regular" NGO activities after having successfully participated in VGD activities ("graduation").
- The evaluation revealed significant improvements. Livelihood quality and socio-economic status of the participating women has been markedly improved. With a better material basis, women's social status, self-representation and decision-making capacity within their households have improved too.
- The target group's preparedness to become NGO members or to take risks (credit based investment, self-employment, etc.) depends directly on their vulnerability, level of information, and choice of options. The project (as well as further NGOs involved in the activities) need to provide adequate and timely information, and should seek to diversify their training as well as the income generating activities.
- Manifest impacts (as were observed during the evaluation visit), as well as remaining challenges and weaknesses warrant further study efforts. More efforts are needed to assess these impacts independently so that evidence of social empowerment of ultra-poor rural women does not remain mostly anecdotal. Particularly the factors motivating NGO membership should be examined. Such study effort would help WFP to make the best possible use of lessons learnt at the level of individual projects.

3.3.3 Integrated Food Security Project (IFS)

Main Outputs

203. **Scope and Scale:** Currently, the IFS project annual allocation amounts to about US \$ 10 million, accounting for 15 percent of the CP budget. IFS consists of Food for Assets – FFA; Community Nutrition Initiatives – CNI, and Training and Nutrition Centres – TNC. The components account for 76 %, 20%, and 4 %, respectively, of the IFS budget.

204. The project is currently being implemented in 11 out of 20 selected districts. These have been categorised into four clusters (Barisal, Rangpur, Mymensingh and Kushtia), which were identified through VAM as areas with very high and high food insecurity (except the Kushtia cluster which has pockets of high food insecurity).

205. Training in the three IFS components (FFA, CNI, TNC) addresses different target groups, but partially it refers to similar subjects, such as skill training (FFA and TNC), nutrition and health education (CNI and TNC). **All components are integrated in community development.**

206. So far, IFS has reached out to 388,000 direct participants. Through the FFA component, 10,000 “assets” (i.e. small infrastructure) were created; a total of 570 Community Nutrition Initiatives were established (each run by one active Community Nutrition Promoter - CNP); and a total of 100 TNC (figures have been rounded) receive support.

207. IFS participants (i.e. community members who directly participate in project activities) are recorded by the WFP Integrated Programme Database System (Table 9). Such participants receive individual supplementary rations, either for taking home or for on-site consumption. Where project components supply households with food rations (instead of individuals), the number of beneficiaries exceeds the number of participants.

Table 9: Number of IFS Participants 2001-2004¹

| Component | 2001-2002 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 | TOTAL until 2004 | Target Reached (%) | Target for 2001-2005 ² |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| FFA | 27,000 | 72,500 | 95,500 | 195,000 | 24 | 829,050 |
| <i>women</i> | 21,600 | 58,000 | 76,400 | 156,000 | | |
| <i>men</i> | 5,400 | 14,500 | 19,100 | 39,000 | | |
| CNI mothers | 5,400 | 21,780 | 34,380 | 61,560 | 74 | 83,600 |
| CNI children | 18,000 | 36,300 | 57,300 | 111,600 | 77 | 145,200 |
| <i>girls</i> | 9,000 | 18,150 | 28,650 | 55,800 | | |
| <i>boys</i> | 9,000 | 18,150 | 28,650 | 55,800 | | |
| | 1,800 | 3,250 | 4,900 | 9,950 | 17 | 60,000 |
| TNC adole. girls | 900 | 1,625 | 2,450 | 4,975 | 17 | 30,000 |
| TNC children | 900 | 1,625 | 2,450 | 4,975 | 17 | 30,000 |
| <i>girls</i> | 450 | 812 | 1,225 | 2,487 | | |
| <i>boys</i> | 450 | 812 | 1,225 | 2,487 | | |
| TOTAL | 54,000 | 137,080 | 196,980 | 388,060 | 33 | 1,177,850 |

¹) Source: Policy and Resourcing Section, WFP CO Bangladesh, May 2004.

²) Source: Operational Contract for the period January 2001-December 2005.

Summary of on-going interventions under the CP 2001-2005, WFP CO May 2004.

208. As indicated in Table 9, **only one-third of the planned total number of participants** (ultra-poor women, men, adolescent girls and children) **have so far been reached**. Implementation has been delayed by piloting, field-testing and necessary adaptations of the new approach, and implementation is continuously hindered by resource allocation constraints.

209. The fact that targets were not sufficiently achieved cannot be explained by over-ambitious target setting. While in CNI projects the number of participants was calculated realistically given the target of the 2001 – 2005 period, the current resource constraints could not be foreseen. Future planning can take such risks into consideration. However, CBOs and local NGOs could be more intensely involved in the grass-roots level planning. Local plan figures should be published. Comparisons of the targeted participation and the development of actual participation should be published regularly to instigate a sense of competition.

210. **Mechanisms and means of intervention:** The components FFA, CNI and TNC each address different target groups, thus ensuring their complementary. IFS has been designed in such a way as to maximise synergies between its components and avoid duplication of efforts.

211. For site selection, the IFS applies an **improved targeting and selection procedure**. Participatory elements are combined with the assessment of certain, predefined criteria in a geographical focus. New sets of selection criteria and priorities for action have been adopted (Operational Guidelines for IFS, 2004). The selection process involves four stages: a first screening on the basis of interviews with key-informants, PRA workshops (to identify eligible households among the communities), structured interviews with the pre-selected households, and approval of the selection by the Upazilla Food Security Assistance Committee.

212. The FFA component is based upon **provision of food in return for labour**. With the help of participants, small infrastructure is developed. Table 10 (below) specifies the types of “assets” created in 2003-2004. **Productive assets** such as sewing machines, goods traded and shop equipment, rickshaws etc. constitute more direct sources of income. **Community assets** (roads, embankments, dams, flood-proof elevations for homesteads), besides providing temporary employment, connect the poor with markets. In cases in which the income allows sufficient savings, the income generated results in improved food security. Several successful entrepreneurs were met in the field (e.g. rickshaw owners get a low but steady income). Even when infrastructure works were affected by floods, their construction and maintenance provided some useful know-how – for taking up repair or rehabilitation works to secure income. The work performed within FFA, however, must be so profitable that savings are sufficient to embark on sustainable income generating activities. There were examples of this condition not having been met.

213. In FFA (FFW and FFT), apart from receiving food, the participants also obtain a 50% share of their entitlements as cash (FFW: 2 kg wheat and Tk 20 per working day, FFT: 20 kg wheat plus Tk 100 per month). The cash component is a contribution by the GoB. In the saving scheme of the FFA, participants save Tk 60 per month on average in the account of the group to which they belong. The group leader and her deputy jointly operate the bank account under the supervision of the partner NGO. Both group leaders and members are very proud of operating the saving scheme themselves.

214. No negative experiences regarding the group saving system were reported to the field teams. Administration of the system is deemed to function well. The management is trusted. Supervision by the selected NGOs provides a certain quality of management. The NGOs involved inform the participants about the regulations which govern the saving system and train those who manage saving groups.

215. With its FFA component, **IFS combines food aid and human resource development with asset creation at community and household level**. There is a clear shift away from large-scale general infrastructure (as in RD) to community assets. The assets created benefit either individual families, e.g. building and shifting of private houses on higher ground to prevent flood damage, or they ensure the overall improvement of the natural resource base of the communities (e.g. canal or embankment maintenance) or improve access to markets and other services (e.g. access roads, ground raising of schools and other social infrastructures). In the case of pond excavation they can open possibilities for future income generation through fish farming activities.

Table 10: Type and Number of Assets Created in IFS (2003-2004)

| Type of Asset | Number Created (2003-2004) |
|---|----------------------------|
| Canal maintenance | 3 |
| Embankment maintenance | 3 |
| Pond excavation | 306 |
| Ground raising of social infrastructure | 2.293 |
| Road rehabilitation | 3.098 |
| Ground raising of private homesteads | 4.360 |
| TOTAL | 10.063 |

216. With women accounting for the vast majority of participants in FFA (up to 80%) there is an obvious gender bias. Visits to project sites established that in some cases, the poorest and most vulnerable community members did not gain access to FFA activities since they were unable to do physical work (chronically sick, handicapped, elderly, etc.).

217. In FFA, problems with the timely delivery of food aid had allegedly occurred during the start-up phase of the project, but no major problems were reported after the first months of 2004. Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) officials explained that the project

assisted the really vulnerable groups of society – specifically because of the decidedly participatory approach of the activity (cf. 3.2.2).

218. The components CNI and TNC are based on a combination of training activities and food aid supplies. Training modules focus on women’s economic needs and interests. In collaboration with a partner NGO, a participatory needs assessment and a market analysis have been prepared, to ensure that women are no longer passive recipients of predefined training packages. IFS seeks to empower women to articulate their own interests, and decide about their own future activities. The (female) community members who act as trainers and promoters in their communities also receive food assistance. By and large, participation in both CNI and TNC is gender-balanced.

Table 11: Number of Trainers and Promoters

| Trainers and Promoters | TOTAL up to 05/2004 | Target reached (%) | Target for 2001-2005 |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| CNI Village Nutrition Promoters (VNP) | 573 | 43 | 1,320 |
| TNC trained child care providers | 98 | 16 | 600 |
| TNC trainers for adolescent girls | 98 | 16 | 600 |

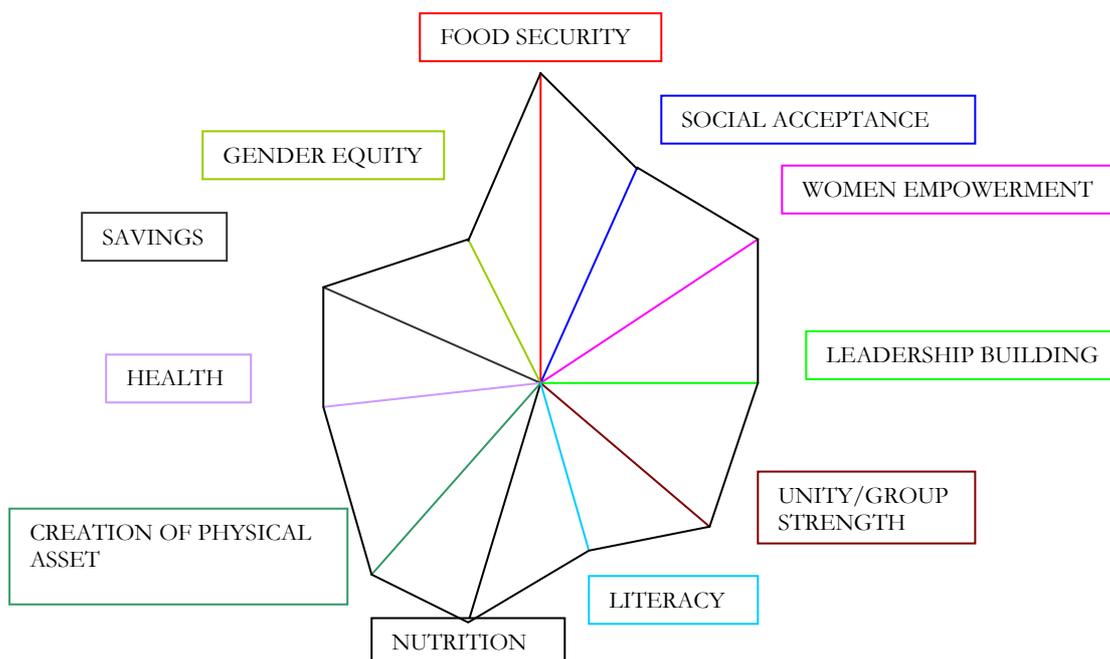
219. As described in 2.2.2., CNI distributes supplementary rations of WSB to participating mothers for consumption by themselves and their children. TNC hands out monthly family rations of wheat grain. In the centres, supplementary on-site feeding with fortified WSB is provided to adolescent girls and pre-school children of mothers attending. Participants explained that they and their children benefited from the food in terms of better well-being and better health status.

Main Outcomes

220. In discussions with various stakeholders and resource persons, eleven major outcomes of the IFS project were identified: Food Security; Social Acceptance; Gender Equity; Women’s Empowerment; Savings; Leadership Creation; Health and Sanitation Improvement; Unity and Group Strength; Improved Literacy; Physical Asset Creation; and Nutrition.

221. Figure 1 visualises their relative importance. In the beneficiaries’ perception, food security clearly stands out as the most important outcome, whereas gender equity and literacy are the least significant. All other outcomes have been attributed roughly equal importance.

Figure 2: Outcome of IFS



222. **Food security:** Food security is perceived as most important for two reasons: Firstly, IFS addresses the poorest and most vulnerable social strata (for whom food is the most basic requirement), and, secondly, the poorest households in rural Bangladesh can usually only provide for their own food needs during less than four months per year. This problem is closely related to accessibility of land resources. IFS assistance ensures periodical employment and income for the beneficiaries.

223. **Social acceptance:** Employment and income raise women's status both within their households, and at community level. Being earning members of their families affords them more independent access to their families' funds. Most women participants also gained influence in the family decision-making process, which they rarely had prior to their participation in IFS. Through their membership/leadership roles as participants and through regular contacts with village leaders, NGO representatives and local government branches (Union Parishads, Gram Sharkers, etc.), women gain access to community fora. Their social acceptance is significantly increased.

224. **Women's empowerment:** Women's empowerment and the status of women within their families' social fabric depend upon their socio-economic standing. Social as well as intellectual empowerment is a function of increased socio-economic status. Another crucial factor which IFS seeks to address is education / knowledge. The project provides information about a broad scope of social and legal issues, such as dowry, child marriage, repression, women and child trafficking, etc. Furthermore, participants receive training in health and sanitation, nutrition, education, asset building, accounting, IGA and marketing.

225. **Leadership building:** IFS constitutes a strong platform and important tool for women leadership building. The group leaders receive practical training in leadership, which ultimately enables them to participate more actively in community level decision-making. Factors determining their improved status are economic solvency, training and education.

226. **Unity/Group strength:** Impoverished women and children are among Bangladesh's most vulnerable groups. Living in a conservative rural setting, they are generally denied the right to voice and express their needs and aspirations, which results in their being effectively isolated from the mainstream of society. IFS provides a representation platform for its target group. Acting as a united body instead of as individuals, poor women receive a chance not only to perform useful social and economic activities which contribute to the welfare of their families and society, but also to demonstrate their ability and thus gain respect and a higher level of social acceptance. The group strength of the IFS members has considerable positive impact on the abolition of adverse social customs and attitudes (dowry, child marriage, exploitation and repression of women, trafficking, etc.). United under the umbrella of IFS and other similar fora, the target group may successfully resist and prevent imposed social inequalities and raise its voice against violation of its rights.

227. **Literacy:** IFS undeniably has a positive impact on literacy. As the socio-economic standing of the target group increases, so does its ability to expend resources for its children's education. However, findings from the stakeholder discussion suggest that – as yet – few IFS participants have achieved sufficient surpluses to allow them to invest in their children's education. Besides, economic wealth is but one of the factors determining the target group's attitude towards literacy. Another crucial factor is their perception of the comparative advantage of having their children attend school over child labour in the household or on farms.

228. **Nutrition:** IFS achieves significant impact on the nutritional situation of the target group. This is the combined result of additional household income, better knowledge about nutritional aspects, balanced diet, and relevant skills such as homestead gardening, poultry and duck farming, etc. In 2002, IFS expanded its interventions to 28 upazilas of nine food insecure districts of Bangladesh, assisting a total of roughly 95,800 project participants, of whom 64,000 participate

under the FFA, 25,200 under the CNI, and 6,600 under the TNC, the latter comprising 3,250 women, 1,650 adolescent girls and 1,700 children.⁵³ Studies on the nutrition impact covering the whole of Bangladesh are not available. A recent nutrition-related progress report (on a very small data basis)⁵⁴, concerning CNI beneficiaries, showed what might be the first steps for investigating the nutritional impact of food assistance (in this case blended food, of which children aged 6 – 24 months obtain 6 kg/month, and pregnant and nursing mothers, 7.5 kg). The nutritional impact might be different in the TNC and FFA projects because in both wheat is distributed (FFA earth work 60 kg wheat plus Tk 450, FFA training 20 kg wheat plus Tk 100; TNC skill training 30 kg wheat to women, 3.6 kg blended food to 13 – 18-year-old girls and 2.4 kg blended food to 6-month to 6-year-old children). The ASOD statistics refer to the development of the MUAC measured in January, March and May 2004, respectively. (In some projects participants' weight development was also monitored.) The MUAC results are characterised as red (critical), yellow (still acceptable but needs upgrading) and green (acceptable or good). Table 12 shows the promising results. (80 similar statements were reported to be available and have similar results.) The Rangpur District experience shows that IFS has considerably reduced malnutrition, even if the results are not representative.

Table 12: MUAC Development of selected CNI Beneficiaries, District of Rangpur, Upazila Gangachara, Union Gojagkanta, Ward 3, House of Nurul Amin

| | 01/01/2005 | | | 03/03/2005 | | | 05/05/2005 | | |
|-------------------------|------------|--------|-------|------------|--------|-------|------------|--------|-------|
| | red | yellow | green | red | yellow | green | red | yellow | green |
| Pregnant mothers | 7 | | | 1 | 6 | | | | 7 |
| Lactating mothers | 5 | | | 1 | 4 | | | 2 | 3 |
| Children (12-24 months) | 13 | | | 3 | 10 | | 2 | 4 | 7 |

Source: ASOD, May 2004.

229. **Creation of physical assets:** Development of small infrastructure (small link roads, raised homestead areas, etc.) is the most straightforward and evident outcome of the IFS component. The stakeholders attach significant importance to this outcome. The assets created by the IFS groups serve as important community assets that benefit the entire locality economically, hygienically and socially. Secondly, united group labour helps develop assets for the individual members, which would be impossible for an individual woman to create (such as homestead raising).

230. **Health:** The positive impact of the IFS on the health status of the people is related to the asset creation, knowledge transfer and capacity-building of the beneficiaries.

231. **Savings:** Savings are related to increased income and involvement in other income generating activities. Most group members have reportedly generated savings. FFA participants benefit from a savings scheme which will enable them to enter into a micro-credit programme after completion of a 2-year cycle. Some data about the proportion of former participants who graduated into the NGO main development programme are available from the first cycle, which lasted only 12 months. The NGO RDRS Bangladesh reports that 63% (11,872 out of 18,900) of former FFA participants became RDRS members. It should be noted that these are very preliminary results, because since the first intake the project has undergone considerable change and adaptation which could lead to better results in future.

232. **Gender equity:** According to the stakeholders consulted, gender equity is the least significant outcome of the IFS project. Stakeholders perceived the task of changing deeply entrenched culture, habits, and social as well as religious taboos as too demanding to be accomplished with the project's means. This, they argued, would require a large-scale, concerted, long-term effort for socio-economic improvement and intellectual capacity building. The

⁵³ WFP, Reaching out to Vulnerable Groups in Chronic Crisis, Annual Report 2002, Dhaka, July 2003.

⁵⁴ by the NGO ASOD (Assistance for Social Organisation and Development).

majority of participants in the FFA component are women (up to 80%). During the field visit only female participants were met. Here the commitment to women seems to lead to a gender imbalance: FFA actually requires both male and female participants to participate in physical work, mainly earth moving. Here, the worse plight of women in society is again reflected, as the selection of participants under IFS is in fact carried out by the community through a participatory process. The inclusion of a majority of women is to be seen as an agreed decision by the hardcore poor. Children's participation in CNI is more or less gender-balanced. The same was observed for children's participation in TNC.

233. **Participants' appreciation of food and cash distribution:** Women interviewed on-site during food-distribution related the target group's favourable judgement of food aid supplies and monetary support provided by the project. In the words of one interviewee: "The food allows us to eat 2-3 meals a day, whereas before we often had fewer meals. Children can eat breakfast before they go to school". Wheat grain is preferred over flour, because it can be stored longer, and processed as required. **The cash share is perceived as equally important because participants can use the money to buy complementary food or to meet other needs.** If only cash were provided, the nutritional benefit would probably be smaller, for the temptation always exists to use the money for things other than buying food.

234. **Human resources development:** Several components of awareness-training and social interaction are found in IFS. The training components of the FFA component consist of awareness-building and functional literacy, plus basic numeracy (108 hours), and training on IGAs (108 hours). Awareness creation is focused on issues such as health, sanitation or family planning, food and nutrition, legal rights and others. CNI emphasises nutritional education in the hope that this may lead to behavioural change. An important step towards awareness-creation, however, is social interaction.

235. Training measures consist of (i) field level training – with human resource development for each component; (ii) development of a cadre of trainers who can meet the training needs; and (iii) the training for administration and management (curriculum development, monitoring realisation of training sessions and outcomes, evaluation for improvement etc.). Training of trainers is crucial to ensure high quality field level training. **Among the selected participants there is a deep-rooted sense of powerlessness.** Various types of training and social interaction are needed to strengthen their reflective and analytical capacity and foster their willingness to challenge unjust norms and practices.

236. To this end, participatory methods provide an important tool. The use of PRA empowers community members to assess, analyse and take action. The same can be said of the self-management of the saving scheme and micro-credit programme. In the field, it was observed that these types of social interaction foster a recognition of the shared interest of the poor and marginalised, and promote group solidarity. At the same time they provoke a growth in self-confidence, make it easier for women to move outside their homes and speak out at public forums, and strengthen the sense of identity and self worth. In this sense the IFS has a high potential to contribute to participants' social empowerment.

237. **Assets created:** It can be assumed that the community as a whole benefits from the community assets such as ground raising of primary schools and linkage roads. Evidence was reported on site, about the poor who became able to use money earned in WFP-assisted projects due to upgraded roads. They saved and bought rickshaws and used them for transport. FFA participants: "Now families can bring their rickshaw-van home at night, this is safer. Before, they had to leave it at the market place." "All villagers benefit from the road, because it connects the village with the main road and there is improved communication with the market place." It goes without saying that the better off will most likely be able to use the public assets more intensively. However, at least after some time the development initiated will provide the poor and ultra-poor with chances to upgrade their economic and social situation. In the case of fish pond

rehabilitation, ultra-poor beneficiaries and owners of the ponds draw contractually fixed benefits from the rehabilitation work.

Projected Impacts

238. No formal project evaluation has yet been conducted, and no baseline reports about IFS are available. Information about the project's impact was gathered at two group sessions with project staff and members of the partner-NGO Jarogoni Chakra, involving a total of 36 experts. The information thus obtained was later verified and corroborated through stakeholder interviews in the course of the field visit to Kushtia. On this information basis the following impacts have been identified:

- The **IFS** project contributes to the empowerment of women, the main participants;
- The training improves participants' literacy (FFA);
- As a result of the awareness training more families send their children to school;
- Husbands have become more supportive: Formerly they did not want their wives to participate in the project, but when they discover the benefit for their families, they accept the project;
- In the Kushtia District 900 households raised their homestead, thereby protecting themselves against floods, enabling each other to grow vegetables around the house in the rainy season, and improving the overall hygiene conditions;
- The accumulated savings during the 2-year cycle (FFA) will be starter capital for further development;
- The confidence of the group leaders and their social status increase;
- The unity and solidarity among the participants/group members increase.

239. The impacts of the **CNI** component are reportedly⁵⁵:

- The nutritional intake of participants improves;
- Severely malnourished children, who were fed regularly, show improved condition;
- Educational activities also have positive influences on non-beneficiaries: the education sessions often take place outside and are also attended, out of curiosity and interest, by non-beneficiary women. They are informed by participant community members of contents of the training, or they sometimes profit by listening as tolerated onlookers and audience.
- Women breast-feed more and buy less artificial baby food;
- Homes are cleaner;
- Participants' confidence has increased and they take collective action;
- Up to now, the referral system to the local health institutions (especially for pregnant women) has ensured more than 600 safe deliveries in cooperation with the local government health structures. However, in the case of serious illness, there are cases where poor women do not have the means to pay for transport fees, consultation fees and medicine - neither for their child nor for themselves.

240. Asked to prioritise the impacts of the IFS project, interviewees came up with the following ranking (the impacts could be extended if de-worming and health referral were introduced.):

1. contribution to better nutrition and food security;
2. women's empowerment;
3. creation of physical assets;
4. savings as starter capital for further development;
5. unity among group members.

241. The TNC component provides access for the beneficiaries to a micro-credit programme run by a partner-CBO. **TNC is one of the few well-funded interventions of the Government,**

⁵⁵ As reported during the field visit by interviewed teachers, participants, monitoring NGO members and WFP officers who perform regular field visits and report their findings.

and GoB runs a full-fledged and independent project with enough staff and funds to manage TNC implementation. The CBO in turn is supported with funds from the Department of Women Affairs (DWA). In the field it was found that the selected CBOs are registered by the DWA, but that its support is failing (e.g. delay in funds provided for the micro-credit scheme). **The TNC visited had no follow-up programme for the participants of the past 12-month cycle.** In spite of the generally good resourcing for the component, the child caretaker had no developmental material (e.g. toys) for the children. The participating women did not know how to continue after the cycle. Compared with the WTC, the TNC seemed poorly organised and did not produce the expected outputs. One reason is probably the lack of support to the CBOs.

242. Selection criteria for partner CBOs have been established (cf. Annex 2). However, care has to be taken in selecting and monitoring the CBOs. **The CBOs should be managed by persons who have a good reputation, are trustworthy and are accepted in the community.** They should also have a good working relationship with government agencies such as the DWA to obtain the agreed support. A past record of successful implementation of similar jobs could be helpful.

Unintended Effects

243. Local government personnel who organised the food distribution in previous WFP food-assisted projects such as the GCCR or VGD are by-passed by the new delivery system. The intention was to streamline management and to upgrade the transparency of delivery by curbing local government personnel's influence. However, the personnel refused to sign the delivery order for the User Committees, thereby causing delays in food delivery. Most probably their complaints were caused by the fear of losing their control over food aid deliveries. A Chairman of a Parishad Union complained about a general shift of responsibilities from Union Parishad to the upazila level and the connected concentration effect (instead of decentralisation). The Team feels that involving representatives of beneficiaries in project work directly is more democratic.

244. In 2002, lack of resources induced WFP to change its policy and abstain from assisting earth works and larger infrastructure works. LGED representatives expressed their concern that, in the absence of specific alternative projects for maintaining large-scale general infrastructure, the IFS's shift to small-scale community assets left a maintenance gap, e.g. for keeping up embankments in the flood-prone areas of the South-western region, which were formerly maintained with WFP assistance. According to a LGED representative, the GoB "faces serious problems to fully maintain these embankments, which are important for the control of floods and saline water intrusion in the coastal area with government funds only. Natural calamities that cause damage to the embankments occur almost every year".

245. The Government has been aware of WFP's shift towards more small-scale community based infrastructure, and GoB needs an alternative strategy to fully maintain the embankments. There is a huge work force trained by WFP and LGED in maintenance work, but so far no alternative strategy has been developed to take over the former WFP contributions to the maintenance work. **Both sides could not agree on a feasible exit strategy.** Capacities for filling the gap could not be built up.

246. The Team holds that BWDB might be able to continue the Sathkhira embankment maintenance project visited if the taxes levied by the government from the beneficiaries of the polders, especially from the shrimp fields and the large farms, were to be identified and tapped to the benefit of the local government agencies concerned with maintaining the polders. **Such a modality should be adopted for all such projects and programmes where donor assistance is phased out.** The need for appropriate intervention when foreign food assistance dries up will arise with EC's discontinuation of food assistance starting in 2004. A working solution was found in the case of WFP's expired aid to orphanages and orphans. As an alternative to previous WFP assistance religious groups and private charitable organisations have taken over.

Strengths of the IFS Approach

247. The IFS proved to have the following strengths:
- Increased involvement of participants
 - Shift from Project Implementation Committee (PIC) to User's Committee
 - Focus on nutritionally vulnerable groups (women, adolescent girls and pre-school children)
 - Shift from general infrastructure assets to community asset development
 - Combination of human resource development with community asset development.

Key Findings on IFS

- The IFS applies an improved procedure for targeting within the chosen geographical areas. The area based approach, introduced in the new IFS activity, aims at avoiding a dilution of effects and demonstrating better results in a more cost-effective way. It seems an appropriate response by WFP to a reduced resource base. The presence of strong implementing partners is an important criterion that receives due attention in the selection of project sites.
- The piloting of new approaches and methodologies on a small scale and close process monitoring have succeeded in a well elaborated concept of the IFS.
- However, constraints in resource allocation seriously hamper the implementation of the IFS activity. Only 33% of the planned target has so far been reached. The practical exclusion of vulnerable people unable to work may constitute a social problem. Homeless and 'floating' people without a permanent residence are not eligible for support⁵⁶.
- Particular strengths of IFS are: (i) Increased involvement of participants; (ii) Shift from Project Implementation Committee (PIC) to User's Committee; (iii) Focus on nutritionally vulnerable groups (women, adolescent girls and pre-school children); (iv) Shift from general infrastructure asset to community asset development; and (v) Combining human resource development with community asset development.
- Direct beneficiaries of the FFA are enabled to participate in planning, implementing and monitoring their own projects.
- Training of beneficiaries and trainers in FFA in awareness-raising (health, sanitation, family planning, food and nutrition, legal rights), functional literacy, basic numeracy and training on IGAs shows first positive results. CNI efforts in training nutrition-related topics are positively accepted. Social interaction can be observed.
- The target groups are convinced that IFS (FFA, CNI and TNC) upgraded their livelihoods. In the North, a high percentage of former FFA participants became NGO members.
- Apart from improving food security, major outcomes are a raise in women's status, and improved awareness about social and legal issues (dowry, child marriage, repression, women and child trafficking).
- GoB assistance to the TNC component (refinancing of the CBO involved in the micro-credit scheme) is failing. This negatively affects the value and the functioning of the credit-scheme. Also, demand for micro-credit is lower than anticipated, due to the lack of management skills (needed for small-scale business development) on the beneficiaries' part. Care has to be taken in selecting and monitoring partner-CBOs. Besides, more capacity-building support, especially for CBOs, is recommended to better enable them to manage the TNCs.
- Beneficiaries are convinced that IFS, FFA, CNI and TNC help improve their livelihoods.

⁵⁶ Marianne Flach: Lessons that can be learned from FSVGD, May 2004, p. 2, and Tufts University, Expectations of "Success" and Constraints to Participation Amongst Income Generation for Vulnerable Group Development Women, Dec. 2001, pp.10 f.

3.3.4 School Feeding Programme (SFP)

Main Outputs

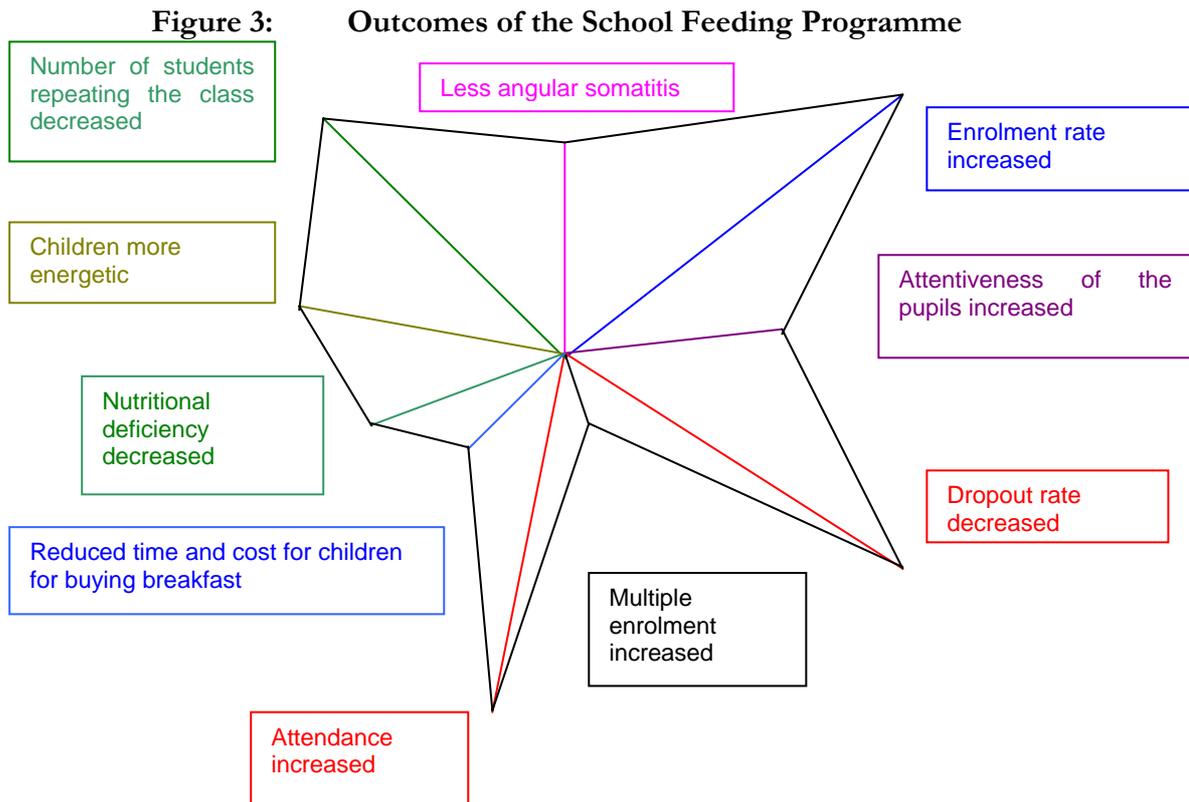
248. The School Feeding Programme complements the Government's efforts to expand primary school enrolment and retention and improve the quality of education for the poor. The project focuses on food insecure and highly food insecure areas and gives incentive to children to attend school. In the field it was noted by teachers, the School Management Committee, and the Upazilla Education Officer that the micro-nutrient enriched biscuits improved pupils' concentration. Education contents, however, should be more adapted to the needs of the rural or urban surroundings and to the practical activities the pupils most probably have to exert in future.

249. Between the year before which Food for Education (FFE) was launched and the year after it became operational, the Programme's incentives effected an increase in enrolment rates of 35%, **compared with schools not included in the FFE programme**⁵⁷. While the FFE focuses on income transfer to the ultra-poor, the WFP-assisted School Feeding Programme uses supplementary feeding to attract pupils to school. The impact can be assumed to be similar, and this was endorsed by statements by teachers and SMCs during the mission. Influenced by the SFP, the gross primary enrolment ratio was claimed to have increased from 43% in 1985 to 95% in 2002. With WFP assistance, gender disparity in enrolment decreased considerably. Female net enrolment reached nearly 83%, narrowly exceeding that of males (UNESCO 2000). The attendance in WFP-assisted schools has already increased from 69% in 2001 to 90% in the last quarter of 2003.

250. Several direct and indirect outcomes of school feeding have been identified in consultation with the stakeholders: the SMCs, guardians of the students, the teachers, GoB officials at the local level and the WFP personnel both at field and CO levels. The school children as the prime beneficiaries were also consulted in a suitable manner. The Team's conclusions on the outcome of the SFP are based on both consultation and observation during the field visit. Figure 3 (below) illustrates the ten most important outcomes of SFP. It is based on consultations with stakeholders, including the SMCs, school children and CO officers concerned.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Jennifer Coates, Zahidul Hassan, School Feeding in Vulnerable rural areas and urban slums in Bangladesh, A Baseline Report to the World Food Programme, Bangladesh, Medford/USA/Dhaka, 2002, p.3

⁵⁸ The ten major outcomes have different impact on the livelihoods of rural people. The length of the lines shows the range, level and depth of impact at a glance. Thus, according to the stakeholders, increased enrolment has the highest level of importance followed by decreased drop-out rate, decreased number of students repeating the same class and increased attendance. Almost similar values have been allocated by the stakeholders to the outcomes: more energetic children, more attentiveness of the pupils and less angular somatitis. The incidence of increased multiple enrolment (children being enrolled at several schools at a time in order to obtain benefits) was given the least value. The fact that in a "without SFP" situation, parents of some comparatively affluent households use to buy breakfasts for their children has diminished the value of the outcome. Apart from the children proper, decreased nutritional deficiency partially impacts on the total nutritional status of the households. In this way, the distributed biscuits provide benefits to all family members. Stakeholders attributed around 50 percent of the value to this fact. "Less angular somatitis" could be argued to belong to the category of 'nutritional deficiency' as it is caused by a vitamin deficiency. However, as it was explicitly mentioned, it was made a category of its own.



Projected Impacts

251. Increased attention and focussing is reported by teachers, but not measured. Allegedly, pupils in the School Feeding Programme attended the lessons more frequently than before. They became more attentive, and they increased their food intake to their personal health benefit. Improved nutritional status was reported by parents, mainly mothers. There is no doubt either regarding general positive effects of the SFP on enrolment, a reduction of drop-out rates and school attendance. In May/June 2004 a complete study covering all areas of Bangladesh was not yet at hand. The paper “At a glance: Impact of School Feeding Programme” (for the districts of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Pachargarh) indicates a clear improvement, measured by the percentages of the situation before SFP (2002) and after SFP (2003) concerning attendance, drop-out and irregular attendance.

252. In the Rangpur District decreased nutritional deficiency, children’s improved nutritional status and health were measured by MUAC. Weighing is done when the children enter school, but in most schools there is no follow-up yet. So development of weight cannot be documented.

Unintended Effects

253. Due to the small number of schools per capita in the country (related to overpopulation, weak infrastructure facilities, etc.) and in view of enhanced education advocacy programmes by GoB and the NGOs, primary schools generally have a good enrolment and attendance status. In May 2004, the Tabujor Primary School visited, a government school, had one teacher for 53 pupils. The respective average at this time in the whole Kurigram District was one teacher for 39 pupils. Teachers report that that the number of pupils increased due to SF. However, whether overcrowding must be attributed to SF only was not assessable.

254. While the sample was not representative enough to draw precise conclusions on “overcrowdedness” and to measure an alleged negative impact on the quality of education, it must be noted that neither the GoB nor WFP have any complementary measures for improving the

quality of education. An augmentation of drop-out rates can be expected as well as a deteriorating quality of lessons.

255. Though there were some recorded cases to be found in literature, unintended effects of the SFP in terms of sending children who were too young to school or multiple enrolment were not identified in the field.

Key Findings on SFP

- SFP well reflects EDP's concept of making food aid functionally subordinate to long-term and more comprehensive development objectives. In the case of SFP, food aid promotes primary education by increasing enrolment, and individual performance of pupils. Despite manifest indications of success, school feeding as such does little for the quality and practical relevance of the education offered. SFP support contributes to, but cannot provide a patent solution for the improvement of, the education of the rural poor.
- Aside from contributing to increased enrolment, SFP yields qualitative benefits, such as reduced gender disparity with respect to access to primary education.
- Further beneficial side effects are improved nutritional status and health of children and to some extent of families, which translates into pupils being more attentive and focused, according to teachers.
- Allegations of multiple enrolments of children (to exploit the system offered by SFP) could not be verified. The problem seems to be limited to exceptions.

3.3.5 Efficient use of resources at project level

256. The WFP CO Bangladesh is well staffed with 151 staff members, 140 of which are national and 11 are international staff (as of May 2004). Thirty-two members of the national staff hold the highest ranks. International staff of the highest levels add up to 4 persons out of 11. The Country Office and the two Regional Offices visited are well equipped. A number of analyses prepared by the CO are listed in Annex 7. Some impact analyses were prepared with consultant assistance. The Team gained the impression that the WFP administration and management had the capacities to organise data collection and process the data needed for evaluating the efficiency of project and programme activities. The CO can control efficient use of resources at project level.

257. The fact that the CO made use of external assistance for preparing the WFP M&E System (including the formulation of log-frames) does not indicate that the WFP CO was not capable of doing such work. Visits in WFP Regional Offices convinced the team that WFP is not only capable of supervising partners, but also has capacities to develop partners.

258. There is no doubt among most donors and practically all beneficiaries regarding the choice and use of food for realising and operating EDP principles. The GoB (in line with its more optimistic estimates of self-sufficiency in food production)⁵⁹ claims that the effectiveness of food based assistance schemes was doubted and that beneficiaries preferred cash.⁶⁰ Food should play a role when emergencies are to be overcome and when very poor areas are to be assisted in order to reduce leakage, increase self-initiative, and induce a more sustainable economic development. This opinion was not backed by the beneficiaries interviewed on site. **Interviewed ultra-poor women clearly advocated that food, not cash, should be supplied, since food**

⁵⁹ As described in 2.1.2, the GoB's calculations are based on the actual per-capita consumption and respective projections, while the WFP holds that the actual need exceeds consumption, referring to the apparent malnutrition of citizens.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Finance, Economic Relations Division, Bangladesh: A National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development, Dhaka, 2003, p.19.

was left to their control. A position paper⁶¹ elaborated by WFP demonstrates the advantages of supplying foodstuff over supplying mainly cash. In it, WFP argues that the choice of food and/or cash depended on the project concerned and the context in which the project was implemented: In projects/ activities such as VGD and FFS which focus on utterly poor in need of food, food was the means of choice.

259. Another question is whether the food rations provided should be imported or bought locally. Comparing the cost of imported food with locally purchased items could be helpful to assess this matter. **However, both WFP and FAO dismiss the question as to whether imported food grain or locally purchased food grain is cheaper (all logistic cost included) as not relevant since the GoB's estimates of the locally available grain surplus seem too optimistic.** Due to the climate, Bangladesh's harvests are not sufficiently stable. However, harvests would have to be readily available and offer a constant surplus to be reliably used to resource WFP programmes. Also food grain (rice, wheat) would have to be supplied in the exact quantities and qualities of the specific food grain demand, which is not the case. This makes procurement on the local markets too risky. Medium and long-term planning is hardly possible. All parties involved confirmed that the imported quantities of wheat did not affect local markets. The Director General for Food in the Ministry for Relief and Disaster Management clearly denied that food grain imports were negatively influencing the national grain market. Final proof of this is yet pending.

260. According to the WFP CO who monitors the price development of food grain the national average open market prices⁶² show monthly variations. However, as statistics reveal, there are no great price swings over the years (variation is between 3.1 and 5.3 percent). Although these price variations have not yet been attributed to specific causes, it is obvious that seasonal influences (annual growth cycle) are involved. If these influences are subtracted, there does not remain much space for other factors such as wheat imported for food assistance. Thus it can be guessed, in the scope of this study, that wheat imports do not in fact spoil local market prices.

261. The distribution system seems to be suitable and well functioning. In the field no significant complaints were expressed and observed.

262. While the introduction of fortified wheat flour was a decisive step towards more efficient use of resources, it also involves the risk that women become unable to sell some of their food ration for immediate need of cash (as medicine, indispensable household goods, cash needed for daily living or to meet the savings requirements of VGD). The selling did have positive impacts due to a better coverage of nutritional requirements to meet the savings requirement of VGD. Since fortified atta is not much appreciated on the market, a substitution of the marketable normal grain ration by atta means a reduced chance to draw cash from monetarising the ration received.

263. According to the WFP Rangpur Regional Office⁶³, bartering/monetisation of wheat for providing fortified biscuits for school children functioned just in time. While no pipeline breaks occurred in biscuit delivery in March, a bottleneck in blended food supply (in TNC and CNI) hampered the implementation of programmes.

264. Local government institutions at the grassroots level are very efficient agents for CP implementation and the spread of the EDP concept. This is one reason why the GoB policy spells out the necessity of the involvement of the Local Government Bodies and the NGOs in the grassroots level developmental process.

265. Female entrepreneurs contacted during the field survey attributed their economic success to the assistance of WFP, channelled through NGOs. On the other hand some beneficiaries

⁶¹ WFP, Bangladesh Food Security Brief, Dhaka, August 2003, p.1.

⁶² WFP, Bangladesh Food Grain Digest, Dhaka, January 2004, p. 21.

⁶³ Summary of the Monthly Report March 2004.

complained that the credit received from NGOs within the CP framework were too small to reach the break-even point of challenging business activities.⁶⁴ This may be traced back to the balance between reaching a maximum of beneficiaries and assisting the single beneficiary in the most comprehensive way.

266. To measure the efficiency of training measures is problematic, since monitoring of the results and outcomes is not very elaborated yet and does not cover a longer period of time after training took place. Generally speaking, the efficiency of training very much depends on the contents. As for training in IGAs, efficiency would rise with a more thorough training of trainers and with more elaborate and extensive training contents. Training issues such as building cowsheds, while no cowsheds are used in Bangladesh, is a case in point. The argument of the NGOs concerned, that participants usually did not know what they were interested in when training started, seems weak. Had issues like this been discussed with the trainees before, they would probably have advocated, for instance, the construction of elevated cattle camps for flood protection. The Team felt that what was taught very much depended on the hired trainers' specific capabilities.

267. Since transport is a bottleneck, close cooperation between NGOs for common use of transport capacities would make sense. This could lead to a reduction of transport cost for all stakeholders and better utilisation of available transport capacities.

Key Findings on Efficiency

- The WFP CO Bangladesh is sufficiently staffed to organise data collection and processing and to control efficient use of resources at project level.
- WFP, along with all other stakeholders, claims that efficiency and sustainability of the development oriented activities were not hampered by importing food rather than purchasing it on the local markets. As medium and long-term planning of procurements on the local markets is almost impossible due to weather and agricultural conditions, stable imports seem the only solution to achieve maximum efficiency of funds. There is no action needed to change the approach.
- Originally intended to upgrade efficiency, the introduction of fortified atta may prove a backlash, to some degree, as it deprives women of the option of upscaling their available cash resources as needs arise. The analysis of efficiency depends on whether or not a nutritional objective or a poverty reduction objective has to be achieved.
- Local government institutions at the grassroots level are efficient agents for Country Programme implementation and the dissemination of the EDP concept.
- Some doubt the efficiency of credits as being too small to reach the break-even point of challenging business activities. Considering the available resources as compared with the demand, however, there will be no ready-made solution to this problem.
- As far as training is concerned, a broadening in scope and better adaptation of training contents to the needs of beneficiaries, and further investment in the training of trainers would render interventions more efficient. WFP should study the possibilities of attaining better results by following a new approach observing the recommendations mentioned.
- In fields such as transport, closer cooperation between stakeholders could trigger synergies and make incidental costs of interventions less expensive.

⁶⁴ Similarly, the actual income generated by managing fish ponds, for instance, is deemed to be much too scarce to actually sustain a living.

3.3.6 Consistency of the Results with EDP Principles

268. Four of the Enabling Development Policy's objectives explicitly guide the current WFP Country Programme (cf. section 3.1.1).

269. As the monitoring process is still being strengthened and elaborated, county-wide data on the influence of food deliveries to children and expectant and nursing mothers are not available yet. However, positive effects of the respective WFP interventions in terms of the EDP principles are reported in the field.

270. The targeted poor households have invested and invest in human capital. More children are sent to school. Although recently the enrolment rate of boys appears to show higher increases than that of girls (reflecting women's interest in boys' education, since they are supposed to maintain the family in later life, and the use of daughters as household assistants), the overall result is satisfactory. The training components of the different types of CP projects are widely applied.

271. Mitigation of natural disasters, in areas vulnerable to such recurring crises, is targeted and also realised to some extent, but the CP's interventions are deemed to be of insufficient geographical coverage. (For instance the present list of approved WFP-assisted Routine Maintenance Schemes leaves out many projects that the GoB considers urgent.)

Key Findings on Consistency

- The *observed results* of CP are consistent with the EDP principles in terms of enabling the poorest to take up education and training (invest in human capital), improve their nutritional status and also cope with natural disasters.
- A lack of country-wide monitoring does not allow for a precise quantification of *country-wide results*. However, reports in the field indicated that results were positively in line with the EDP principles.
- In mitigating the consequences of natural disasters, upscaling of geographical coverage would be desirable.

3.3.7 Sustainability of Results

272. Sustainability of the programme in the long run requires i) a conducive policy and conducive institutional arrangements; ii) sustained partnership; iii) ownership of the concept and the activities by the partners, especially by the host government; iv) suitable monitoring systems in place; and v) use of a flexible approach by both donors and GoB to cope with the changed situations. Many of these are available now to different degrees.

273. Sustainability of activities in Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) is not assured as long as the assistance granted does not provide a solid basis for future development. This would entail a thorough preparation of projects, e.g. in the form of sound business plans for income generating activities, and the provision of advisory services accompanying the activities over a period of at least two years. It would also entail an increase of credit facilities for facilitating greater and more profitable investments. The services offered by government authorities, such as the Department of Fisheries, are rather limited.

274. The VGD cycle was not yet re-assessed, but the field survey strengthened the opinion that it may be too short. A portion of the women could not graduate into the mainstream development programmes of NGOs after the cycle ended and they are not yet sufficiently qualified. Those not graduated, however, have only small chances of becoming independent and successful, as already outlined. Of the cooperating NGOs, only the biggest (BRAC, RDRS,

TMSS) most probably have the infrastructure and the qualified staff needed for absorbing greater numbers of working women.

275. Participating NGOs should be encouraged to initiate group ventures and move towards more productive enterprises for the poor in both the crop, non-crop and non-farm sectors. In many instances, the increase in incomes and assets is only marginal or small so that sustained poverty reduction will be a challenge.

276. The Integrated Food Security Project absorbed only part of the Rural Development/Maintenance Projects. In 2002 maintenance projects, which made up a part of the Rural Development CP activity, were revitalised in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, an area of high political interest to the GoB. Dependency syndromes were not to be observed, although in one place women initially complained about their husbands' attitude as they became lazy after they realised that their spouses had an (additional) income. An article published in May 2004 in a newspaper at Dhaka reported maintenance activities in a rural area which were performed as a mere self-help activity, without external assistance. This is an example of self-confidence and self-reliance.⁶⁵

277. The Team feels that the levies earned by the government from the beneficiaries of the polders, especially from the shrimp fields and the large farms, should be identified and diverted to the local government agencies of the polder areas for continuing the maintenance programme. Such a modality should be in place for each of the projects supported or formerly supported by the donors. The embankments protecting farmland and shrimp farms could be sustained if greater entrepreneurs in the polder areas were encouraged to contribute part of their income to maintenance funds. An introduction of dyke wardens responsible for stretches of embankments could strengthen the development effects and contribute to sustainability, as wardens would be encouraged to maintain their place of living and could mobilise the local population for urgent maintenance work.

278. The Team feels that a greater level of ownership by the Government of the programmes and appropriate exit and take-over strategies should be introduced. As mentioned earlier, the Team's field visit experience in Satkhira reveals that after the exit of WFP from the embankment maintenance activities, the livelihoods of 300,000 people living within the three polders were put at risk. The GoB agencies at the local level are not in a position to undertake any policy decisions and the GoB reportedly lacks funds for continuing with the routine maintenance project.

279. The lack of a clear-cut exit strategy, on the government's side as well as on the side of international and national organisations, must be considered a threat for sustainability of all EDP related interventions in Bangladesh. Although it is apparent that the recurring natural disasters and crises tend to make comprehensive long-term planning illusory, exit strategies should be drafted and introduced by all stakeholders, at least for development-related activities.

⁶⁵ Likewise, in the SFP, mothers repeatedly affirmed that they would continue sending their children to school, even when food rations had stopped.

Key Findings on Sustainability

- In VGD, modifications may be needed to ensure that the assistance granted really provides a solid basis for future development (such as sound business plans for income generating activities, advisory services accompanying the activities over a period of at least two years, increase in credits). The VGD cycle is deemed to be too short, thereby negatively affecting the sustainability of projects.
- NGOs could initiate group ventures and move towards more productive enterprises in the crop, non-crop and non-farm sectors. Often, the increase in incomes and assets is too marginal to achieve sustained poverty reduction.
- No dependency syndromes were observed in the field.
- Sustainability of projects protecting assets could be improved by administrative regulations, such as taxing the protected assets or incomes they provide (and using the revenues for investing in maintenance work), by introducing wardens or encouraging entrepreneurs to invest in maintenance funds.
- Sustainability of the current activities greatly depends on a steady procurement of assistance services, at least in a medium term, and on appropriate follow-up and exit strategies. The lack of exit strategies at all levels means a substantial threat to sustainability.

4 CONCLUSIONS, CONCERNS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

280. **The 2001-2005 Country Programme well reflects and conforms to the relevant international and national policy background.** The CP reflects GoB policy objectives and development priorities⁶⁶, e.g. the Five Year Plan and the National Nutrition Programme. A high level of country ownership is thus assured. Findings indicate that it is coherent with development strategies of other donors, and thus constitutes an enabling framework for co-ordination between WFP and other donors⁶⁷. The CP was further found to be fully in tune with the WFP Enabling Development Policy, and to reflect a definite majority of EDP strategic objectives⁶⁸.

281. The high degree of coherence with the relevant policy background can be attributed to the fact that all partners involved orient their actions towards relevant international processes and multilateral agreements⁶⁹, whence major development principles and strategies are derived: e.g. poverty alleviation, gender mainstreaming (women's and children's rights, which aspects are relevant also within the wider context of Good Governance), combating HIV /AIDS, nutrition and health, education, training and capacity building.

282. **WFP maintains partnerships across all levels of programming and implementation.** As a member of various national, regional and local fora, WFP is partner to relevant horizontal as well as vertical networks. Major partnerships include UN agencies, bilateral donor agencies⁷⁰, international / regional / national NGOs, national as well as decentralised sector administrations, etc. The Local Consultative Group (LCG) is the key to maintaining partnerships with bi- and multilateral agencies⁷¹. Cost-sharing arrangements within the LCG context warrant further attention and improvement, as do information exchange routines.

283. The evaluation findings indicate high levels of ownership and acknowledgement of WFP achievements at all levels, including target groups, implementation partners (both public, and civil society), and other donors. A clear perception of tangible advantages⁷² (in terms of income, improved livelihoods etc.) for the target groups' is considered a major determining factor for success⁷³.

284. **Under the 2001-2005 Country Programme, more partnership oriented implementation approaches have been adopted.** New partnerships with NGOs and – to a lesser degree – with the private sector have been established in recent years, and participatory approaches have been expanded. Refinement is still needed in terms of monitoring and exit strategies. WFP adopted guidelines for the planning and the implementation of EDP related projects, which have been shared with partners co-operating with WFP. These guidelines have

⁶⁶ GoB actively participates in and contributes to WFP-assisted projects. GoB adheres to the WFP VAM approach, and proactively coordinates its food-aid with WFP, which makes GoB in fact the single most important implementation partner of WFP.

⁶⁷ The observed reduction in assistance seems to be mostly due to worldwide economic recession, rather than substantial disagreements about strategic objectives of the donors concerned.

⁶⁸ It must be noted that a number of constituent elements of the EDP have actually been devised, and tested by WFP Bangladesh.

⁶⁹ such as, for example, the Millennium Development Goals

⁷⁰ Partnerships with UN services and other donors are mainly guided by UNDAF and CCA.

⁷¹ The LCG sub-group on food security is jointly chaired by WFP and FAO.

⁷² Market access, representation vis-à-vis administrative services

⁷³ Target groups require a clear-cut perspective of how WFP interventions are to be followed up.

been drafted in close cooperation with GoB and the donor community, which in fact assures a high level of acceptance⁷⁴.

285. The 2001-2005 Country Programme applies systematic and integrated programming, planning, and monitoring of interventions, assigning food aid to a functionally subordinate, complementary role within a wider development policy rationale. This notion has been conceived through a decade-long, continuous process of negotiations between GoB and the donor community. This is in line with one of the cornerstones of the EDP, which entails, inter alia, (i) mainstreaming of food aid interventions into wider contexts of development, (ii) site-specific and participatory targeting routines, and (iii) enhanced monitoring⁷⁵, which is increasingly focused on results, medium and long-term impact. Enhanced monitoring routines require dissemination, training, and specific capacity building, especially among WFP implementing partners (such as NGOs involved at local level). To this end, a special RBM unit has been established at the country office, and a handbook published. A higher degree of transparency will be achieved through the forthcoming publication of monthly reports.

286. One further aspect of integration is linking food aid to ongoing EMOP/PRRO interventions. In practice, integration of food aid interventions into a wider development context translates into a more focused implementation⁷⁶. There is a need to define clear exit-strategies in order to avoid that partial withdrawals lead to gaps and a lack of sustainability.

287. Resources available to WFP have decreased substantially⁷⁷, restricting WFP's room for manoeuvre and making it impossible to extend the CP's scope. WFP had to shift the available means to the most urgent activities. The only area which received increased assistance was human resources development.

288. **Targeting based upon spatial information provides a precondition for a more effective and efficient use of food aid resources.** The GoB-endorsed Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping System (VAM) approach has become an integral part of the CP, and provides a model that is widely used by donors in Bangladesh. Modifications within the area based approach have been observed – e.g. the inclusion of moderate and low food insecure areas in what used to be an activity for highly food insecure areas only (VGD, a national GoB safety net programme).

289. Targeting is further characterised by a high degree of stakeholder participation. CBO and (local) NGOs are involved in the identification of beneficiaries. Their results are fed into the stepwise targeting process.

290. **In Bangladesh, WFP achieves satisfactory involvement of vulnerable groups, especially women and children.** In the design of WFP supported development activities the conditions of vulnerable groups are adequately taken into account. However, selection criteria for

⁷⁴ The Operational Guidelines for Collaborating NGOs targeting food security for Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Women and their Dependents (FSVGD) were elaborated by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in partnership with the WFP and the EC.

⁷⁵ Monitoring Checklists and Reports for different activities are considered very informative and useful tools. Their scope should be expanded. In particular, the Questionnaires for monitoring 2004 ECW Implementation: Food for Training (FFT) and 2004 ECW Design Self-Assessment: Food for Work (FFW), Nutrition, Relief/General Food Distribution (GFD) will help to bridge gaps of information and complement the general picture of impacts and outcome of food assistance in Bangladesh. Further monitoring tools include longitudinal surveys and Participatory Learning Exercises.

⁷⁶ Rural Development projects were reduced and partly incorporated into the Integrated Food Security budget line. WFP's development-oriented operations increasingly focus on empowerment and human resources development for improving livelihoods, whereas assistance to great infrastructure projects has been abandoned.

⁷⁷ There has been a 52% decrease for development-oriented activities in the transition from the CP 1997-2001 to the current one.

VGD (of childbearing age and able to work) appear inadequate, in that they restrict access of the ultra-poor to development activities⁷⁸.

291. While awareness training increases the knowledge base of women and makes them socially aware, it should be remembered that many social issues are not completely under women's control, such as the giving or taking of dowry, or child marriage. The inclusion of male partners in awareness-raising, which is currently debated, seems a necessary means to achieve long-term changes in social behaviour. The problematic context for women's achievement and integration will need to be addressed through measures aimed at reducing insecurity and social violence for women and through an employment oriented growth strategy. This is beyond the scope of the CP and requires a political solution.

292. **Beneficiaries appreciate WFP support.** To women, food aid is a viable means to improve their nutrition and health status, and to increase their decision-making capacities and social standing at the same time⁷⁹. Unlike cash, food remains under women's control. Given the extent of children's malnutrition, and its consequences for education and girls' livelihoods, food is an indispensable key to development for this target group. Most stakeholders claim that the quantity of food sold on local markets does not negatively influence local market prices. In any case, there is no real alternative to importing food since local food grain production is instable and cannot be planned over longer periods of time. Most donors prefer the provision of food over cash.

293. **WFP interventions are successful in achieving their goals, but sustainability remains an issue.** The EDP has achieved measurable success in various respects: asset creation, introduction of income generating activities, increased enrolment⁸⁰, women's graduation into NGOs' mainstream activities and NGO membership, access to micro-credit, skills development and access to initiatives such as savings and insurances. These are considered vital by WFP programme participants for sustained livelihoods. Sustainability, however, remains an issue. In income generation, bottlenecks are represented by: a) the availability of places within NGOs projects into which participants can graduate, and b) the actual volume of job opportunities/the market capacity for 'graduates' in rural food insecure areas. National job opportunity schemes might be able to assist in this respect but are currently not provided for.

294. Beneficiaries' uncertainty about future opportunities, observed in some projects, may be due to some NGOs' reluctance to promise people's integration into their mainstream activities in the face of a demand higher than what can be met. A similar gap may arise in schools where an ever rising number of enrolled pupils is confronted with teaching staff who cannot be that easily expanded, especially in rural areas. Coping strategies have not yet been identified.

295. Another point is the result of income generating activities: WFP assisted beneficiaries have been found to gain self-confidence through their entrepreneurial activities. However, they may not always be able to save enough assets for creating a secure livelihood. Training in income generating activities is limited to a number of specialised fields. Sometimes it is not sufficiently professional, or does not take in account the actual markets in which the beneficiaries mean to perform their new activity. Training of trainers would be worth investing in. Extension advice from various government departments, which are better equipped in terms of knowledge and skills, could provide a viable alternative.

⁷⁸ Although the selection criteria make the project consistent with the National Nutrition Programme and may be necessary for operational purposes, it should still be emphasised that the government needs to take up programmes for this category of the poor. It remains to be discussed what role WFP can play in this regard.

⁷⁹ Food can be sold to provide for urgent needs of the household, which is consistent with WFP implementation strategies. The introduction of fortified flour, which is not as easily marketable as ordinary flour, proved to be a backlash in this respect. On the other hand, this intervention (under the Vulnerably Group Development project) had significant effects not only on the improved nutritional status of women but also on reducing distribution losses.

⁸⁰ cf. the increase in attendance in WFP-assisted schools from 69% in 2001 to 90% in the last quarter of 2003.

4.2 HIGHLIGHTS OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strengths of WFP's Interventions in the Context of Bangladesh

296. Based upon the above conclusions, the main strengths of WFP interventions in Bangladesh may be summarised as follows:

- Coherence with the relevant development policy framework.
- Country ownership and high level of acceptance among target groups and other recipients of support.
- Mutual reinforcement of WFP strategies and objectives, development priorities of the partner country, and other donors' concepts and instruments.
- Donor co-ordination, integration of programming and planning exercises, and strategic focusing of scarce resources.
- Demonstrated improvement of target groups' livelihood conditions.
- Demonstrated improvement of the situation of particularly vulnerable groups.
- Existence and good operational potential of an EMOP-PRRO-development interface.

Weaknesses of Interventions in the Context of Bangladesh along the Line of EDP

297. **Despite improvements of the national policy and legal framework, gender equity has not yet been fully achieved.** Bangladeshi women still lack equal access to educational services. Likewise, they are denied equal opportunities in terms of (social) mobility, and legal protection. WFP interventions need to focus more closely on gender-equity issues, particularly by means of awareness raising and sensitisation of men in society, e.g. through training of trainers.

298. **The overall effectiveness of WFP interventions is restricted by a lack of management capacities of the national partners'.** Promising implementation partnerships notwithstanding, many national authorities' management capacities and accountability are still lacking. Unless management capacities can be significantly improved, this will remain a bottleneck for development cooperation in a general sense.

299. **Access to land resources remains a crucial issue.** Despite the EDP commitment to sustainable livelihoods, the food security situation of many households' is threatened by the continuing degradation of natural (land) resources. Apart from recurring natural disasters, this problem is directly induced by poverty. Bangladesh is characterised by an extreme scarcity of land, nearly all of which is already under intensive cultivation, industry, rural/ urban settlement and infrastructure. Population growth forces agriculture to bring marginal areas and wetlands under cultivation. Most ultra-poor participants in the WFP supported programme will hardly be able to obtain access to any land, be it degraded or not.

300. **Sustainability of WFP interventions continues to be threatened by Bangladesh's failing economic progress.** Without substantial economic recovery, manifest achievements of WFP might evaporate in the foreseeable future. At the same time, functioning exit policies (which yet have to be developed) will become less likely. If macro-institutional arrangements to promote WFP's EDP related activities do not continue as they did in the past, sustainability of WFP's achievements is put at risk.

301. Sustainability of WFP interventions is further restricted by a certain lack of transparency on the part of the participating NGOs. For a substantial number of target group members, the odds of successful "graduation" to full NGO membership, and the economic prospects associated with their active involvement, remain largely unclear. Many participants cannot predict how reliable NGO support will remain in the future.

302. **Relevance of WFP interventions is diminished to some extent by procedural restrictions.** VGD selection criteria create structural disparities for the elderly as well as juvenile women, and tend to exclude the physically weak or disabled. Likewise, the past shift of focus,

away from large-scale FFW interventions, restricts WFP capacity to assist society's most vulnerable groups.

303. **Targeting procedures may trigger unintended side effects.** VAM procedures risk bypassing small, isolated poor communities because they are systematically geared towards the most vulnerable parts of the country. Furthermore, VAM does not yet allow for adequate consideration of inequity with regard to land resources and natural resource tenure.

304. **Results based monitoring calls for further improvement.** As yet, available data do not allow country-wide monitoring, and comparison of quantitative findings. However, available monitoring tools remain particularly weak in respect of qualitative assessments. While this problem does not necessarily restrict simple output-to-purpose reviews, it certainly impedes more advanced impact assessments.

4.3 CONCERNS

Resource Allocation

305. The reduction of available resources may **force WFP to streamline its quite diverse activities** and concentrate them, e.g. on strengthening the VGD programme and integrating it better with other programmes, as already started on a limited scale. It is highly probable that – unless the national economies of donors assisting WFP grow significantly – **donors will continue to reduce their assistance** to WFP. This may also mean that WFP's assistance to the VGD programme could be reduced in the future. When the allocation of food supplied to WFP Bangladesh was reduced – the quantity has dropped from around 633,500 MT in 1997 to a mere 173,900 MT in 2003 – the situation of the VGD programme was reviewed alongside other multi-donor nationwide programmes involving food deliveries. Here, WFP could change its strategy from targeting a few beneficiaries in many places to targeting many beneficiaries in a few places, provided the GoB approves a switch from its policy of geographic coverage - and provided that local NGOs are available with sufficiently high absorptive capacities. Another option could be to **cancel future assistance to the target groups residing in less food insecure areas, or leave it completely to the GoB**, since the chances of success in mainstreaming ultra-poor into development activities may be higher in such geographic areas that are better off. In any case, shortening the period of beneficiaries' participation in project activities should be avoided. In the interest of sustainability, maintenance should be given preference over new investments.

306. On the other hand, the reduction of food assistance to routine maintenance projects involves jeopardising expensive infrastructure works such as embankments and polders. To finance further maintenance work, collecting duties and contributions from wealthy beneficiaries for their being protected and assisted in performing economic activities (or other measures – cf. section 3.3.7) should be introduced. This system could become an integral part of an exit strategy.

Programme and Project Design

307. The example of the TNC component of IFS shows that solid funding cannot make up for conceptual deficits, lack of institutional support (in this case to CBOs), or lack of transparency and timely information of target groups.

308. Generally, no **baseline data** were collected at the beginning of activities to evaluate the impacts on nutrition/health/care behaviour and social empowerment of poor and ultra-poor women at a later stage. However, only with available baseline data can behaviour changes of the target group and changes of woman's position in her socio-cultural environment be envisaged and projects be evaluated.

309. While much has been found out about the general ultra-poor woman's physical support and their potential integration into the market economy, WFP should also take care of another important target group: that of **young children and expecting and nursing mothers**. The CP

has components to enable them to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related needs. However, the volume and impact of these activities need monitoring and evaluation. The integration of de-worming treatment for young children is not yet implemented in any of the programmes: CNI, TNC, SFP. A health referral service is in place (CNI), but its effectiveness is limited (the referral system can only be as good as the health system itself.) No baseline surveys were conducted which would include i) a causality analysis of the determining factors of malnutrition, and ii) a knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) study concerning nutrition/health/child care behaviour and current behaviour constraints.

310. Most impact studies so far concentrate on important economic aspects of food security, however they do not sufficiently address behaviour changes related to nutrition, hygiene, and health practices at household level. According to the M&E system established, these are among the main purpose indicators: rural ultra-poor households practice desirable nutrition improvement activities.⁸¹

311. All CP activities (VGD, IFS, RD) contain curricula for awareness training in nutrition, health, hygiene and childcare for ultra-poor rural women. It seems, however, that the **co-ordination between these activities with regard to the content of the messages and the education methodologies could be improved** (e.g. do other activities benefit from the field experiences made by the FSVG?).

312. In cases where the absorptive capacity of present NGOs tends to be overstrained, either (i) the number of participants in specific areas should be limited to the capacities of the NGOs/CBOs; or (ii) these participants would have to be supported more intensively by WFP; or (iii) a broader coverage with more NGOs/CBOs in other areas will have to be sought. Where activities are geographically concentrated, larger NGOs should be interested in extending their activities to these areas. Lack of educated trainers could be overcome by a comprehensive “training of trainers programme”. Part of the resources earmarked for assisting trainees might be transferred to this end.

313. The medium and long-term progress of poor people embarking on income generating activities and self-employment should be **followed up over a protracted period**. Some general systematic monitoring combined with consulting activities should be established.

Framework Conditions

314. The synergies created by VGD’s collaboration with the National Nutrition Programme (NNP) should be monitored and one should debate whether **similar lines of cooperation could be established with other programmes**. Another way to serve this goal would be a close cooperation with the EC, DFID and the USAID-funded Food Security Capacity Strengthening Programme (FSCSP), implemented by the FAO.

315. To facilitate sound analyses of the current and potential efficiency of foreign food aid, and considering that the existing policy of importing food might have to be revised if the Government’s assessments are confirmed, it seems vital that WFP (other donors) and the GoB agree on a **uniform approach to assessing the degree of food availability and future food requirements in the country**.

316. Man-influenced environmental hazards (e.g. land and resource degradation, over-exploitation of forest resources, erosion problems, salinity intrusion during the dry season in the southern flood plains, industrial effluents and municipal wastes) have an impact on the livelihoods and food security of landowners and landless households. **Judicial management of the natural resources is essential if livelihoods are to be sustained in Bangladesh. This, however, is not part of WFP’s mandate, and thus underpins the need to seek interagency**

⁸¹ M&E system, annex 2: key indicators for M&E, p.11ff purpose indicators.

cooperation as well as enhanced integration of food-security strategies into intersectoral approaches for development.

317. The EDP is innovative in many ways and suggests appropriate implementation of modality, technology and capacity development and other forms of support to the most vulnerable. The modalities for programme implementation at grassroots level and the technologies used can contribute to poverty reduction, health and nutritional benefits, education, skill upgrading and income and employment generation. Given this, it is imperative that WFP's EDP related activities be replicated, expanded and sustained. This requires solid ownership of the concept and the activities by relevant GoB agencies: MWCA and its affiliated institutions, MLGRD & CO, BWDB and the DRR.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

318. In the following section, recommendations are listed for quick reference. It should be noted that all recommendations directly emanate from a process of stepwise reasoning. This process starts from the level of findings from which conclusions are derived. Conclusions, in turn, lead to recommendations. Recommendations, of necessity, relate to the identified weaknesses alone, and avoid repetitious listing of the WFP's numerous merits and successes. For this reason, and with a view to avoiding false and distorted judgements of WFP interventions in Bangladesh, readers are cautioned to always read the conclusions and recommendations in context.

319. To facilitate this process, and for greater ease of reading, for each of the below recommendations the most relevant references have been listed by their respective paragraph-numbering (indicated in edged brackets).

- Promote integration of WFP activities through inter-institutional networks and institutionalised collaboration routines [300]
 - Review cost-sharing arrangements, coordination procedures and collaboration routines vis-à-vis other LCG members [282]
 - Enhance interagency cooperation and inter-sectoral integration of food security strategies [316]
- Develop phased exit-strategies through multi-stakeholder consultations, and define timelines and benchmarks for their implementation [286]
- Devise capacity-building strategies which target national sector administrations as well as para-statal and non-governmental service providers [298]
- Systematically review practical implementation of the VAM approach, and consider adoption of more flexible and situation-specific procedures (with a view to including moderate/low insecurity areas, as appropriate) [288, 303]
- Assess appropriateness of VGD (particularly the selection criteria) in a similar manner, so as to better accommodate the needs of the most vulnerable social strata [290, 302], including young children and expecting/nursing mothers [309]
 - Highlight the importance of gender-equity issues through intensified awareness creation and training [297]
 - Consider systematic inclusion of males in awareness-raising measures, so as to facilitate holistic changes of family settings and behaviour among the target group. [291]
- Enhance the participants' prospects of graduating into regular NGO activities [294]
 - Improve the quality of cooperation with implementing partners, specifically by way of promoting enhanced transparency on the NGO community's part [301, 307]

- Consider the introduction of standardised reporting formats; and devise training and dissemination mechanisms addressing particularly implementing partners of the WFP [285]
- Investigate options for expanding the participating NGOs' absorptive capacity [312]
- Investigate options for expanding further the scope of training measures through additional recruiting and/or training of trainers, as well as inclusion of government service/training branches of relevant sector administrations
- Enhance "realism" of training and extension measures by placing more emphasis on income generating measures and market-access strategies
 - Follow up on long-term success of market-access strategies for the target group [313]
- Enhance coordination of training measures and better streamline existing curricula [311]
- Enhance depth and accuracy of impact monitoring mechanisms and instruments [310]
 - Review, adapt and disseminate improved Results Based Monitoring routines [304]
 - Investigate synergetic linkages between VGD and NNP, and consider expansion of institutionalised cooperation with other (donor supported) programmes [314]
- Investigate options for improving accuracy and timeliness of qualitative as well as quantitative data; consider integration of WFP data into existing database formats at national level (e.g. GIS based systems provided by other donors) [308].