

Annex 1 Background and context

ASPS II has been implemented in a period during which Bangladesh has experienced a remarkable drop in poverty levels and improvement in living standards since 2005 (Table 1), despite the global economic shock and natural calamities.

Table 1: Development in poverty and nutrition indicators in Bangladesh from 2005 to 2010.

	2005	2010
National poverty level (%)	40	31.5
Urban poverty (%)	28.4	21.3
Rural poverty (%)	43.8	35.2
Average monthly national household income (BDT)	7,203	11,480
Average monthly urban household income (BDT)	10,463	16,477
Average monthly rural household income (BDT)	6,096	9,648
Food intake (grams)	947.8	999.9
Rice intake (grams)	440	416
Per capita calorie intake (kilo)	2,238.5	2,318.3

Source: Bangladesh Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2010.

The level of poverty has decreased, and household income has increased considerably, during the period 2005-10, in urban as well as rural areas. This comes at a time when the economy has been growing by 6% per year on average and remittances by 23%. Likewise, a remarkable improvement in nutrition levels has taken place across the country, primarily due to consumption of a more diversified food basket. Per capita intake of food items per day has increased by 5.5% (6.21% in urban and 3.5% in rural areas) between 2005 and 2010. The food consumption pattern also saw a change. The average quantity of rice intake decreased while consumption of wheat, potato, meat and fish rose. Per capita calorie intake per day increased by 3.6% over the period (4.1% in rural and 2.3% in urban areas).

Other welfare indicators related to human development such as access to services and social welfare schemes also showed tremendous progress. Demographic trends have helped to improve the quality of life: the average size of household decreased from 4.84 in 2005 to 4.5 in 2010. In terms of inequality however, the country has not improved; wealth remains relatively concentrated within the population¹.

Agricultural production, prices and productivity

The agricultural sector is the most important sector of the economy of Bangladesh due to its role in food security, employment and livelihood. Agriculture's share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is around 20%, and more than 70% of the population is directly or indirectly employed in the sector. The agriculture of Bangladesh is dominated by crops which account for more than half of total agricultural GDP. Fisheries & livestock are also important sub-sectors contributing to agricultural GDP by, respectively, around 25% and 15%.

¹ The inequality indicator of per capita income, the Gini Coefficient, decreased only marginally within the period, from 0.467 in 2005 to 0.458 in 2010. A higher Gini Coefficient implies more concentration.

Rice production, which is vital for the Bangladesh economy, increased by around 20% from 2005 to 2009². The largest increase came during 2007-08. This development is also reflected in data for the harvested area for rice production which rose sharply during 2007-08, followed by a slight rise in 2009³.

The rice price has fluctuated considerably in the same period (Figure 1) and is thereby to a large extent following the trend that has been observed from world markets during the same period. From 2007-08, the price increased dramatically from Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) 15 to over BDT 30 per kg, in line with the sharp production increases within the same period. The price then fell back again to below BDT 20 per kg in 2009, only to increase again to over BDT 30 per kg, or double of the 2005-level, by the end of 2010.

Figure 3.1: Rice price development in Bangladesh, 2005-10



Source: fao.org.

The yield of rice production has increased steadily over the period 2005-09; from just below 3,800 kg/hectare in 2005 to 4,200 kg/hectare in 2009. This development may be viewed as a productivity measure for the primary agricultural sector, even though developments in the fertility of the land and weather conditions could also influence the figure. A comparison of Bangladesh with neighbouring countries shows that both the amount of arable land and cereal yield is highest in Bangladesh. On the other hand, Bangladesh has the lowest labour force productivity within agriculture as measured by value added per worker, which indicates that there may be an unused potential for higher valued (cash) crops⁴.

In conclusion, Bangladesh has, over the last five years, experienced a notable increase in the production, yield and harvesting area for rice. This accompanies an increase in rice prices (although fluctuating) over the same period. Agricultural productivity has also increased, but is notably lower than in neighbouring countries.

² Source: faostat.fao.org.

³ Source: faostat.fao.org, production statistics.

⁴ Source: Worldbank.org/data and faostat.fao.org.

Gender and social aspects

The proportion of women in the agricultural labour force went up from 25% in 2002-03 to 34% in 2005-06⁵. However, revised enumeration methods document, that women who are mainly unpaid family workers account for 45.6% of total employment in agriculture. In addition to their routine domestic work, women are responsible for most of the agricultural work in the homestead. Women's role in paddy production is substantial and expanding. Women are also actively involved in fisheries, forestry and livestock production⁶.

Within agriculture, women are generally responsible for livestock and poultry rearing. Activities performed by women comprise of feeding livestock, cleaning sheds, securing for the night and health care, while men are involved in the work connected with taking the animals out of the compound. Traditionally, women in rural Bangladesh are also responsible for the household fuel supply and they collect dung for fuel from the forests where cattle are grazing⁷.

Despite the signing of 'The Dhaka Declaration for Eliminating Violence against Women in South Asia' in March 2003 and adoption of the 'Prevention of Repression of Women and Children Act 2000' by the GOB, domestic violence remains a pervasive problem and presents a threat to the security of girls and women in Bangladesh. Studies show that more than half of the married women aged 15-49 reported that they had experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence from their husbands, and one quarter had experienced it in the past year⁸. Other studies reveal that women with more education are less vulnerable to domestic violence while women with a dowry agreement or personal earnings that contribute more than nominally to marital households are at higher risk⁹.

Other FFS interventions in Bangladesh

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has been at the heart of the establishment and development of many FFS programmes in Asia, Africa, Middle East and Latin America. Likewise in Bangladesh, FFS activities started through involvement of the FAO. Bangladesh was a member country of several Regional FAO IPM Projects, and implemented national programmes under those umbrella's: i) Inter-Country Programme for Integrated Pest Control in Rice in South and South-east Asia; ii) FAO Programme for Community IPM in Asia; iii) FAO-EU IPM programme on Cotton in Asia; and iv) FAO Regional Vegetable IPM Programme in Asia.

FAO was also involved through the FAO-DAE managed Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) in Bangladesh, implemented from 2002-07, using FFS in their farmer groups for managing activities

⁵ Country Gender Assessment Bangladesh, Asian Development Bank, 2010.

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/sd/WPdirect/WPre0104.htm>.

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/sd/WPdirect/WPre0104.htm>

⁸ Women and Girls in Bangladesh, UNICEF, 2010.

⁹ Women's Productive Role and Marital Violence in Bangladesh Research and Evaluation Division BRAC and Socioeconomic Factors and Processes Associated With Domestic Violence in Rural Bangladesh, International Family Planning Perspectives Volume 30, Number 4, December 2004.

related to on-farm water management, crop intensification (mostly hybrid rice production and soil fertility improvement) and agricultural engineering services.

FAO is still a major player in relation to FFS in Bangladesh through i) FAO – Emergency 2007 Cyclone Recovery and Restoration Project (ECRRP) (World Bank funded) which has organised 315 FFS in crops, livestock, fish (separate). These FFS are implemented through local NGOs. In Barisal the FAO-ECRRP project is piloting 15 pilot Integrated Farm Management (IFM) projects, with the assistance of AEC and RFLDC; and ii) The Disaster & Climate Risk Management in Agriculture Project (DCRMA), implemented jointly by DAE and FAO under the umbrella of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP), is aiming to make communities resilient to disaster and climatic risks and intends to use Climate Field Schools, based on the FFS concept. Activities are implemented in 200 risk prone areas.

In addition to this, the GOB is funding IPM-FFS on rice, implemented by DAE. They use the 14-session IPM-FFS curriculum, similar to the one applied in ASPs I.

A number of NGOs are, or have been, involved in FFS in Bangladesh: i) CARE Bangladesh was one of the pioneers in using FFS in their 'agricultural' activities (e.g. LIFE-NOPEST and INTERFISH, between 1993 and 2003) addressing poor households. Their FFSs covered three seasons with 20-23 learning sessions and 40+ support sessions for male and female participants separately. CARE has since shifted their attention to other areas of cooperation. However, several of the CARE trained FFS trainers are still active in FFS activities (such as Master Trainers within the RFLDC components); ii) CARE also implemented the Strengthening Household Access to Bari Gardening Extension (SHABGE) project from 1999 to 2002, with the objective of improving household food security for poor farmers, addressing mainly female participants. The FFS were run by one facilitator over a period of 30 months (five seasons) and included more than 10 fruit and vegetable species. The expected output was 2,831 FFS with a total of 57,100 participating farmers for the project with an extension up to June 2007¹⁰; iii) Aid Comilla had a two-year project on IPM funded by Danida in Noakhali, Laxmipur and Feni districts between 1998-2000. They established 3-400 FFS; and iv) Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) has since 2005 implemented FFS on agricultural topics through their local partner organisations. The FFS, with 15-25 participants, majority women, are facilitated by Farmer Promoters, selected from the groups and trained by RDRS staff and with their own study plot/demonstration field at their home. A total of approx 8,500 FFS have been implemented by 12-19 partners during that period.

¹⁰ This information is based on an Impact Assessment study of 2002. The Evaluation has no information whether this project was actually extended till mid-2007, or what the final outputs were.