

POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY

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1 INTRODUCTION

'Society comprises two classes: those who have more food than appetite, and those who have more appetite than food.'

~Sébastien-Roch Nicholas de Chamfort, Maximes

The relationship between poverty and food insecurity is a complex one where several key dimensions could be found. For many reasons, such as ill health, disability, loss of job, lower level of education and employment and higher cost of living etc. are the factors besides the major causes of food insecurity. The risk of food insecurity in low-income families is associated with lack of access to land, single-parent families, and lack of alternative occupation, unstable income level and having a poor family head. The most important issue facing by the most people is inadequate access to food which is fundamentally an outcome of poverty (European Commission, 2000).

Food security of Bangladesh is adversely affected by higher food prices; since income may be increased but not sufficient for poor people to adjust with high prices compared to lower income. Therefore, the amount of food insecure population has been increasing. Food insecure population is now estimated in Bangladesh to be 65.3 million people; nearly 45 percent of the total population of the country is now food insecure (< 2122 kcal per person per day), and one-quarter (23.9 percent) of the population is understood as rigorously food insecure consuming less than 1805 kcal per person per day (WFP, 2012).

Inadequate domestic production, lack of food imports, aid and national food stocks causes food unavailability at national and household level. Therefore, 7 percent of households are facing acute suffering in accessing food regularly whereas up to 30 percent of the households encountered such conditions. Sometimes 12-15 percent of the households experience chronic under-consumption and frequently worries about food access whereas sometimes up to 30 percent confronts such food vulnerability (Murshed et al. 2008). Though total food supplies are adequate in Bangladesh, poor people are restricted and vulnerable in accessing food. This is because, poverty includes lack of education, employment, land access, microcredit issues, income imbalances, huge differences between the rural and urban areas, intra household disparities and gender discriminations and all these features are responsible for vulnerability to access in food security.

2 REGIONAL DIMENSIONS AFFECT FOOD SECURITY

The causes and effects between levels of poverty and levels of food security in different areas of Bangladesh are discussed in this chapter. Regional differences have the major impacts on poverty and food security. This chapter will discuss elaborately about the major two zones: the South and the North. World Food Program (WFP) observed

extreme poverty in the poorest upazilas like the northwest, the coastal belt, Mymensingh, Netrakona, Bandarban and Rangamati. Districts with more than one million people living in poverty include Sirajgonj, Naogaon, Bogra, Mymensingh and Chittagong (WFP, 2012). To address food security, nutrition and health situation in Bangladesh, the districts can be divided in six zones (Table 3.1).

Table 1: Zones to address food security status

1. **North West (NW):** Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Panchagor, Rangpur and Thakurgaon.
2. **Drought Prone (DR):** Naogaon, Chapai-Nawabganj, Rajshahi and Joypurhat.
3. **Northern Chars (NC):** Bogra, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Sirajganj, Jamalpur.
4. **Haor Basin (HB):** Kishorganj, Sunamganj, Sylhet and Brahmanbaria.
5. **Coastal Belt (CB):** Chandpur, Chittagong, Lakshmipur, Noakhali, Barguna, Barishal, Bhola, Patuakhali, Bagerhat, Khulna, Satkhira, Madaripur and Sharatpur.
6. **Chittagong Hill Tracks (CHT):** Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachari.

Source: Helen Keller 2010

In rural Bangladesh, the lean seasons, March-April and October-November is the time of harvesting the main crops i.e. rice. During this time, job opportunities are less than other time for those who are fully dependent on agricultural wages. All these factors are responsible for affecting regional food security. Regional poverty exhibits those factors which are affecting food security. It appears from substantial variation across regions of the country (Table 3.2).

Table 2: Regional incidence of poverty (head count rates) by CBN method, 2010

	Using Lower Poverty Line			Upper poverty line		
	National	Rural	Urban	National	Rural	Urban
National	17.6	21.1	7.7	31.5	35.2	21.3
Barisal	26.7	27.3	24.2	39.4	39.2	39.9
Chittagong	13.1	16.2	4	26.2	31	11.8
Dhaka	15.6	23.5	3.8	30.5	38.8	18
Khulna	15.4	15.2	16.4	32.1	31	35.8
Rajshahi(Former)	21.6	22.7	15.6	35.7	36.6	30.7
Rajshahi new	16.8	17.7	13.2	29.8	30	29
Rangpur	30.1	30.8	24	46.2	47.2	37
Sylhet	20.7	23.5	5.5	28.1	30.5	15

Source: Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2010

In relation to upper and lower poverty line, national poverty was the highest in Rangpur region in 2010. Rural poverty was the highest in Rangpur as well as urban poverty in Barishal region. On the other hand, the lowest poverty incidence region was Chittagong. The high incidence of poverty in the Rangpur region apparently reveals the production pattern in this region which directly indicates that poverty infuses food insecurity. There are relatively a few large land holders, whose surplus products are channeled out of the area through internal trade. Most of the rural people have lack of access to land ownership. Either they are marginalised farmer or day labour. These situations create a gap between demand side of production or supply aspect in the determination of food security.

2.1 Southern Region: Haor Basin, Coastal Belt and Chittagong Hill Tracts are debilitated by Food Security

Previously known as the breadbasket of Bangladesh, southern regions- haor basin, coastal belt and Chittagong hill tracts are the most vulnerable one to poverty, saline water, climate change impact and disaster propensity. Rice and other crops production is hampered in southern region due to salinity and flood. The southern region has lagged behind in case of rice production since there is no sufficient introduction of irrigation system (U.S. Government Document, 2011). Recently, the light of hope in the South can be seen. This is because, the government and the development organisations are keen to stimulate agricultural production in the South including surface water canal irrigation, saline resistant varieties of rice and other crops, crops suitable for multiple cropping seasons, and the promotion of fish and other high-value agriculture.

Large populations of *coastal regions* are frequently being affected by disaster. Their disaster management capacity cannot capture food security. In addition, these regions are now concentrating on shrimp cultivation. In the short run, it is reducing poverty to some extent in this region. However, salinity is hindering agricultural production. In the long run, it will obstruct food security in this area. Due to flooding & prolonged water-logging in the south-west of Bangladesh basically, in Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira, food was identified as the first priority by the communities. Flood shocks and disasters in these poverty prone areas amplify food insecurity. These three affected districts ranks as the highest in the country, at over 44 percent of the population being classified as extreme poor (WB, WFP and Bangladesh Proportion of the Population Extreme Poor, 2005).

Hidden and unwrapped poverty is prevalent among those who are involved in coastal and marine livelihoods on the bank of Bay of Bengal. The exploitation of coastal and marine resources is often associated with low social status – fishing castes in Bangladesh where a relatively high level of dependency on natural resources and traditional occupations is a common feature. Short-term concerns for survival and food security take precedence over the concerns for long term resource sustainability in turn increases poverty and food security which thus, becomes a self-perpetuating poverty cycle (Townsend, 2011).

The people of *Chittagong hill tracts* (CHTs) are highly vulnerable to food security due to their limited access and availability to food. Their food habit includes rice which is the staple food together with meat, fish and vegetables. Their subsistence livelihood lead them in getting supplement meals from the jungle and hills (potatoes, vegetables, snake, frog, etc) as well as they consume *nappi*, a semi-dried fish-paste with a powerful flavor and supposedly a high protein content (Das, 2008). Low yield in *Jhum* (one kind of agricultural practice) crops, damage due to drought, and attack of wild animals, water stagnation as well as flash flood are the major causes of food insecurity in CHTs. An average calorie intake was found as higher in Khagrachhari (2173 kcal per capita daily) followed by Bandarban (1964 kcal) for ethnic people. Chakmas were found to have higher intake of calorie (2102 kcal per day) followed by Marma (2081 kcal) where the lowest calorie intake was among the Tanchangya (1901 kcal) which was significantly lower than the national average (The News Today, 2012 and BARI).

Haor region is highly flood prone area and thus the crop production is impeded mostly every year. The farmers in the *Haor* areas have to rely on one single crop - the *Boro* paddy being flood prone regions. If the *Boro* crop fails, the households become insecured by food which could push thousands of families into deeper poverty. Hence, the food security atlas of World Food Program (WFP) Bangladesh categorize the *Haor* region as the highly food insecured areas of Bangladesh. Recent studies on *Haor* region is significantly worse off. Here, about 55 percent of the under-five children (of age) are underweight against a national average of 41 percent (BDHS and Haor RIMS Survey, 2010). The districts of Sunamganj, Netrakona, Kishoreganj and Habiganj are ranked as 'hot-spots' of poverty. The people of *Haor* thus, are forced to adopt extreme coping up mechanisms to face the food insecurity whereas reducing the quality and quantity of food intake has detrimental impact on the young children especially in terms of nutritional aspects. *Haor* RIMS survey showed that in the present year, two-thirds households with of food-short repeatedly have to buy food on credit or by borrowing and over 90 percent sometimes, reduces the quantity of consumption in a meal. Even nearly 60 percent people occasionally skip a meal (Mahmood, 2011).

2.2 Northern Region: Monga, Char and Drought Impeded Food Security

In particular, the poor northern regions of Bangladesh are extremely suffering from food insecurity. These regions are combined of the Northwest, drought prone and Northern *chars*. The population of this region is closely dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. The poverty and food insecurity in this region is attributed to a phenomenon called *Monga*. It is a seasonal food insecurity primarily caused by an income and employment deficit. The major areas affected by this *Monga* are: Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Rangpur.

Lowest productivity causes from unequal land distribution and industrialisation which is far below the national average. Mainly industries are related to the processing of tobacco that is off-farm income for the unskilled rural poor. The rice and saw mills, brick-field works earth works and rickshaw pulling are the alternative employment opportunities besides agriculture labour here. A major reason for the low employment opportunities is the lack of agricultural diversification which is largely based on paddy (Zug, 2005).

Food insecurity in the *Chars* shows that these areas in northern part belong to the poorest settlement among whole Bangladesh. Livelihood of *Chars* is determined by the nature of the rivers. Frequent floods and river erosion result in a loss of assets for the population, agricultural activities, hamper of livestock, scarcity of water and shortage of fodder. Employment opportunities are decreasing. People are being displaced and their access to work. Land rights are very complicated; consequently, poor people are often losing their land to the powerful. Besides agricultural day-labouring, share cropping and share rearing for absentee landlords, alternative income sources are even scarcer than on the mainland. Lower literacy rate, inadequate health facilities are making them poorer socio economically in terms of food insecurity (Zug, 2005).

Manifestation of *Drought* can be found in Naogaon, Chapainawabgonj, Rajshahi and Joypurhat. *Drought* affects Bangladesh in the pre-monsoon and post-monsoon periods. The drought condition caused shortfall of rice production of 3.5 million tons in the 1990s. The loss would be substantially much higher for all *Rabi* crops-sugarcane, tobacco, wheat etc. as well as to perennial agricultural resources such as bamboo, betel nut, fruits like litchi, mango, jackfruit, banana etc. Depending on the intensity of *drought*, the estimated yield reduction of different crops even the yield loss may vary from 10 percent to 70 percent because of limited irrigation at the critical stages of crop growth (Banglapedia, 2012). During 1994-96, *droughts* causes immense damage to crops, especially rice and jute, the main crops of North -west of Bangladesh, and bamboo-clumps, a main cash crop in the region (Murad and Islam, 2011). Arsenic affectation is another crisis of water scarcity in this region. Local people of this *drought* area are being affected by arsenic in the long run.

3 INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND CONSUMPTION LEVEL

In case of per capita income, nearly 70.58 percent increase in lower poverty line and 73.69 percent increase in upper poverty line can be seen in per capita income in 2010 over that in 2005 (Table 3.3). Though per capita income is increasing due to increase rate of wage or production but still, food security remains under doubt as their purchasing power cannot run in a similar way than that of price hike. Moreover, urban poverty is increasing compared to rural poverty. This reflection of rural urban differences can be related to food security. To some extent, rural people are more food secured as they can gather their food from land, subsistence livelihood or from other sources like relative's house. On the other hand, the urban poor have less option to collect food from alternative option without buying food. Therefore, in the growing urban poverty, food insecurity is increasing compared to the rural people.

Table 3: Per capita income of the poor (CBN), 2010

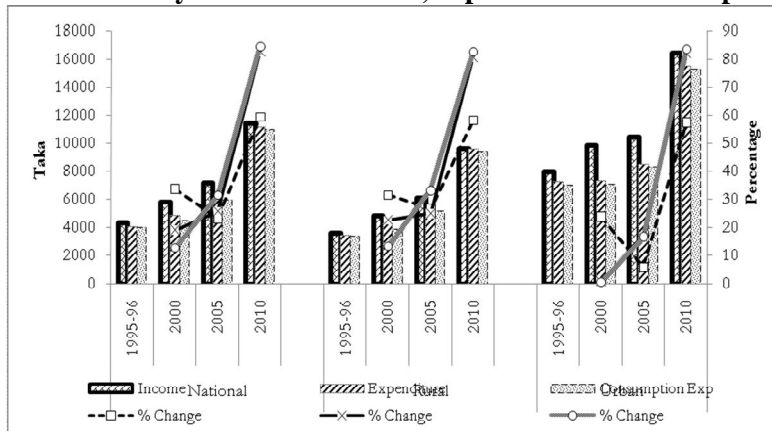
Year	Using Lower Poverty Line					
	National	Percentage change	Rural	Percentage change	Urban	Percentage change
2005	646.51		630.53		741.52	
2010	1102.84	70.58	1083.72	71.87	1250.18	68.60
Year	Upper poverty line					
	National	Percentage change	Rural	Percentage change	Urban	Percentage change
2005	731.73		703.98		862.4	
2010	1270.93	73.69	1211.57	72.10	1545.96	79.26

Source: Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2010

It is evident that the average monthly income per household at current price was estimated at Tk.11479 at the national level in 2010 (Figure 3.2). This was Tk. 7203, Tk. 5842 and Tk. 4366 in 2005, 2000 and 1995-96 respectively. In 2010, the monthly household income increased by 59.36 percent compared to 2005 and by 162.9 percent with respect to 1995-96. Average monthly income per household at current price was

estimated at Tk. 16475 at urban level where average monthly income was estimated at Tk. 9648 in rural settings. In instances of expenditure and consumption, both are lower in the rural area of Bangladesh rather than the urban area. Yet rural urban differences are remarkable. Basically, people from rural area are largely dependent on agriculture. They have less option of earning rather than urban settings. In addition, wage difference is also a cause of less income, expenditure and consumption in the rural areas of Bangladesh.

Figure 1: National monthly household income, expenditure & consumption expenditure

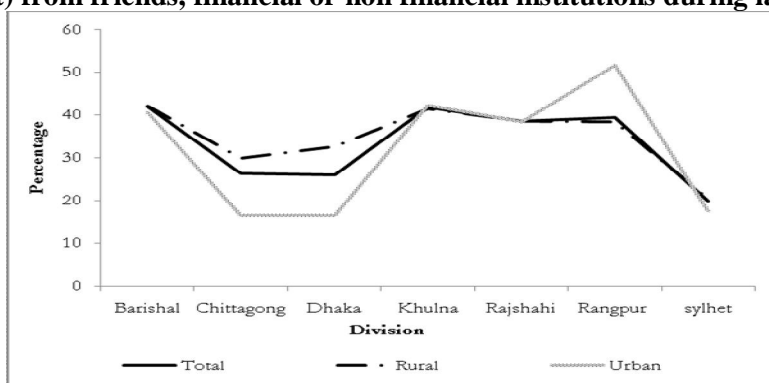


Source: Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2010

4 MICROCREDIT ISSUES IN APPROACHING FOOD SECURITY

Bangladesh is the pioneer country in prevailing microcredit program for poverty reduction. Yet, the relationship between poverty alleviation and microcredit is in ambiguity in Bangladesh. The fact is that the measurement of success of microcredit in achieving food security is dependent to its poverty alleviation capacity. A large population in Bangladesh is receiving microcredit from various sources for fulfilling different purposes. Percentage distribution of households with members receiving loans (including micro credit) has been demonstrated here from friends, financial or non financial institutions (Figure 3.3). The proportions were relatively similar in the urban and rural settings of Barishal and Khulna division where 41.95 percent of the households in Barishal division and 41.72 percent in Khulna division have received loans from various sources. The lowest percentage of 19.97 received loan in Sylhet division.

Figure 2: Percentage distribution of households with members receiving loans (including micro credit) from friends, financial or non financial institutions during last 12 months



Source: Disability, Migration & Remittance, Micro Credit, Crisis & Crisis Management, Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2010

4.1 Positive Impact of Micro Credit in Poverty Alleviation Consequently Food Security

The major positive aspects of microcredit in Bangladesh are the enhanced investment, purchasing power, economic security and empowerment of women. Microcredit is helping the poor in smoothing consumption and in asset building. Micro-finance programs upholds investment in human capital like schooling, awareness rising to reproductive health and increases individual and well being of household. (Latifee, 2003).

In Bangladesh, the major contribution by microcredit is found for women. Socio-economic empowerment of women has been visible now because of microcredit. Women have now possessed the better purchasing power. They are able to invest money in small scale like livestock, agriculture, fisheries and poultry. Education and well being of households have been increased in the contemporary time. Social mobility of women and bargaining power is also remarkable on the occasion. All these factors are evolving gender equality in Bangladesh.

Therefore, by means of credit, poor women turn out to be better fighters (Latifee, 2003). Once they have access to credit, they are being prepared to maneuver to get advantage by their economic empowerment. They are trying their best to earn more to build and expand their capital base as well as improve their quality of life. Wives are now seen as a source of income rather than as a burden, their status will rise as well as their decision-making power (Hashemi, Schuler, and Riley, 1996). Furthermore, because of microcredit, women of Bangladesh are gaining:

- Greater involvement in income-earning activities
- Increase in awareness about social, economic, and health related issues
- Increase in the adoption of family-planning methods
- Increase in girls' education and school-enrollment rates (Rahman, 2000)

Therefore, the women are becoming the owner of micro enterprise through microcredit. Their socio-economic mobility is now outstanding as a result of increased earning opportunities through microcredit and is running towards achieving the food security.

4.2 Assessment of Microcredit in Reducing Poverty Alleviation and Achieving Food Security

The ongoing debate is still there whether microcredit program is beneficial to the extreme poor or not. Sustainability of the benefit from microcredit program relies on its commitment to the poor. High interest rate traps these poor in vicious circle of poverty. Moreover, it overlooks the extreme poor who have no capabilities to repay the loan. Time given to repay the loan is also questionable. There are so many people in the rural areas that are taking loans from various microcredit organisations and falling into poverty trap.

Table 4: Women’s extent of control over loan use (n = 253)

Extent of control	Full	Significant	Partial	Very Limited	No Control
Women (percentage)	17.80	19.40)	24.10	17	21.70

Source: Adapted from A. M. Goetz and R. Sen Gupta, 1996

These entire incidences question the capabilities of microcredit for poverty alleviation and about gaining food security. To solve these difficulties, appropriate planning is required to be happened. For a well designed program, it is a matter of time (Latifee, 2003). The following figure describes the sources and reasons for taking loan which are contributing poverty alleviation as well achieving food security.

Figure 3: Percentage distribution of loan recipients by formal sector

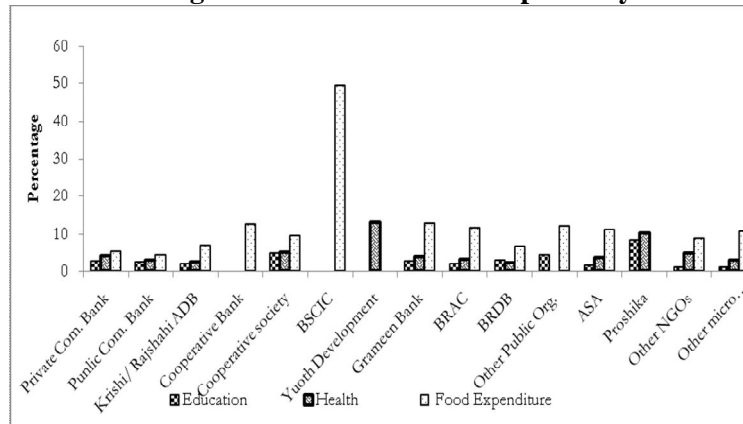
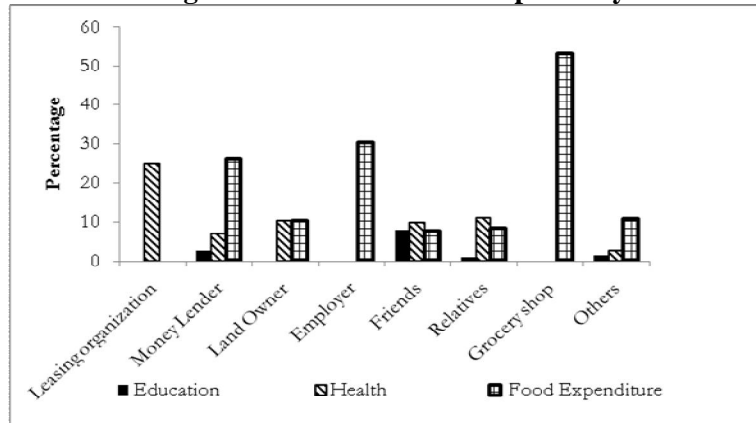


Figure 3.5: Percentage distribution of loan recipients by informal sector

Figure 4: Percentage distribution of loan recipients by informal sector



It is evident that among the several reasons, amount of food expenditure is really significant (Figure 3.4 and 3.5). Comparatively, this amount is higher than those of education, health and marriage purposes. This can be assumed that people are taking microcredit mostly for investing in business, agriculture and food expenditure. It's a good sign, yet further thinking is also needed for them who are investing less in education and health purpose. Price hike make them bound to invest in food expenditure rather long term effectiveness by education and health.

4.3 Microcredit for Agricultural Productivity

The agrarian economy of Bangladesh is mostly consisted with small and marginal farmers. In such case, microcredit has marginal impact in the agriculture sector since these institutions limit their lending to those who possess less than half an acre of land (the functionally landless). Informal credit sources like local money lenders and wealthier community members often charge high interest rates. As a result, the landless poor in rural Bangladesh are facing crisis often that affects their economic well-being as well as food and agricultural productivity. Poor farmers' access to agricultural credit remains limited and they are usually missed by regular credit facilities (Raman and Husain, 1995).

The users of Grameen Bank microfinance can bring 81.5 percent of their cultivable land under High Yielding Variety (HYV) *Boro* production compared to 76 percent of the non-users (Alam, 1988). Cultivation of HYV requires irrigated water, large doses of fertilisers and pesticides. Before joining the Grameen Bank, users could not afford to apply these expensive inputs to their farms for HYV cultivation due to their low income level. From above discussion, it can be said that sufficient and sustainable microcredit for agriculture can increase food production in Bangladesh.

5 GENDER MAGNITUDES IN POVERTY AS WELL AS FOOD SECURITY

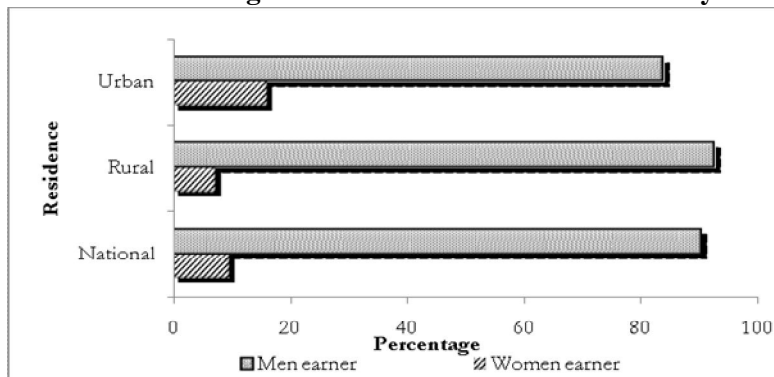
Poverty and food security both have a woman faced feature. Despite progress in some areas like life expectancy, education, fertility rates, maternal mortality rates etc. women are still facing barriers to socio-economic and political opportunities due to three

interrelated factors; patriarchy, race and class. Women are facing continuous legal discrimination such as in property rights, rights of inheritance, laws related to marriage and divorce, management of property, educational attainment and employment opportunities. Even they are not entitled¹ to their own deserved land. Violence against women is making these poor women more vulnerable putting them into the worst situation. In spite of constitutional guarantee, they are deprived of all kinds of fundamental needs. Poverty situation thus, makes women more vulnerable in terms of food security.

5.1 Women, Employment and Food Security

In 2004 per capita expenditure was lower than per capita income of women headed household. Actually, income and expenditure both decreased in case of women headed household in 2004 compared to 1999. At national level, per capita income of poor women was Tk. 615 and expenditure was Tk. 480. In urban side, income and expenditure both were higher than the rural areas. It was also observed that percentage of expenditure on education incurred for men and women at the national level was 43.8 percent for women compared to 56.2 percent for men. In rural areas, the percentage was 42.0 for women whereas 58.0 for men .In the urban settings, the expenditure on education was 46.7 percent for women whereas 53.5 percent for men. Therefore, women are also poor from educational perspective (Gender Statistics, 2008).

Figure 5: Gender wise earning status of the household members by residence, 2005



Source: Gender Statistics of Bangladesh, 2008

Both in formal and informal sector, employment status of women are below than employment status of men. Even compared to the previous years, participation of women was 1.3 million in 2010 in formal sector while it was 14.9 million in informal sector (Table 3.5).

¹ Entitlement refers by Sen (1984, p. 497) as “the set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command in a society using the totality of rights and opportunities that he or she faces”.

Table 5: Employment by Sector (million)

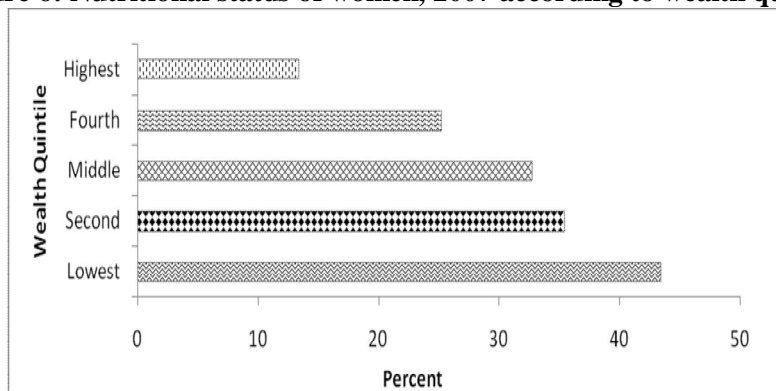
		Total	Male	Female
Formal Sector	2002-03	9.2	7.3	2
	2005-06	10.2	8.6	1.6
	2010	6.8	5.5	1.3
Informal Sector	2002-03	35.1	27.2	7.9
	2005-06	37.2	27.5	9.7
	2010	47.3	32.4	14.9

Source: Labour Force Survey, 2010

5.2 Nutritional Status of Women

In Bangladesh, including other developing countries, women spend a large time in collecting, cooking and searching for fuel in rural Bangladesh. From *utilisation insight*, poor women and girls are more likely to suffer from malnutrition, especially pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls (IFPRI, 2000). However, unequal distributions are common in Bangladesh where women and children are not getting enough food. There is a stereotyping assumption or so-called social custom that mothers and wives have to take food at last in rural Bangladesh. In addition, the girl children are given less food than their male counterparts of the households. All these factors are making women largely food insecure. The nutritional status of women largely depends on poverty situation. Malnutrition among women is extremely prevalent in Bangladesh. More than 50 percent of women are suffering from chronic energy deficiency (FAO, 2012). The percentage of malnourished women in Bangladesh has decreased with an annual rate of 2.03 percent between 1996-97 and 2007. This decline Body Mass Index (BMI) <18.5 of women is well on the right track in terms of the MDGs target of less than 20 by 2015 (Titumir and Rahman, 2011). Nevertheless, the inequality persists in the rural areas which are significant according to the education and wealth quintile. BMI<18.5 in the urban settings was 19.6 percent while in the rural residence it was 32.6 percent (BDHS, 2007).

Figure 6: Nutritional status of women, 2007 according to wealth quintile

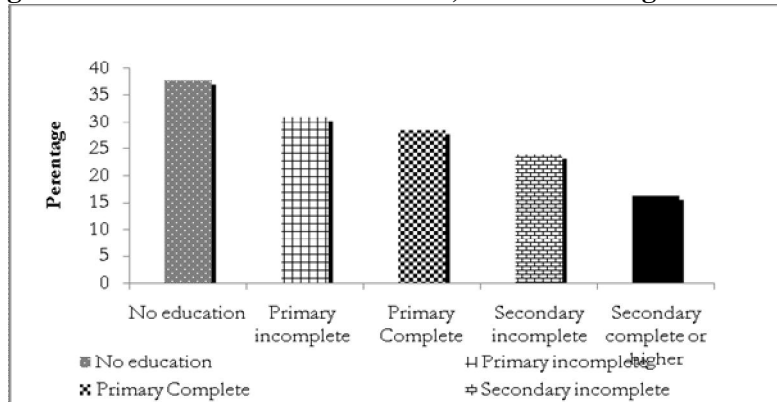


Source: Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2007

Wealth situation of women affects nutritional level as well as food security. Women of the lowest wealth are total thin (<18.5) 43.4 percent where women of the highest wealth are total thin (<18.5) 13.4 percent (Figure 3.7). In case of educational attainment, lack of education especially those women who have even no primary education are more thinner that is 37.6 percent compared to women who have higher educational attainment that is

16.2 percent (Figure 3.8). Therefore, poverty situation including wealth of women, education, employment, residence and so forth aspects are significantly determining nutritional aspects of women which are making them more food insecure.

Figure 7: Nutritional status of women, 2007 according to education



Source: Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007

5.3 Women in Production and Access to Food

The role of women in food security has remained invisible to the national economy and they are regarded as the poorest of the poor. From this viewpoint, the feminisation of poverty² signifies that increasing numbers of women are suffering from malnutrition, maternal mortality and infant mortality. Poverty affects women and children first; consequently, women and children are suffering from food insecurity.

From *production perspective*, in the rural Bangladesh many women are active farmer. Contribution of women in economy especially, in agriculture is not regarded in the national economy (Boserup, 1970). During the post harvesting period, most of the rural housewives are directly related to food processing. Contribution of women in agriculture is not represented nor recognised in the official statistics on food supply and movement. Agricultural subsidies, technology, information through extension officers do not reach to the women as well. Adequate compensation of women's productive as well as their reproductive labour is crucial to ensure food security globally as well nationally (Plan American Health Organization, 2012). From *access side*, in Bangladesh, women are in many cases restricted from owning or inheriting land through legal, social and religious rules and obligations.

6 CONCLUSION

Poverty and food security are both the causes and consequences for each other. Eliminating poverty level from the people of Bangladesh will be capable to access in food irrespective of all classes. The production and utilisation must be sufficient by doing so. Government of Bangladesh has national food policy as well national and international

² Diana Pearce (1978) coined the term “feminization of poverty” in the late 1970s. It refers increasing number of women and children among the poor. Not only in terms of economic poverty within household, society and nation, rather has it addressed all kind of gender biases and deprivation towards women.

development organisations are also working towards achieving food security. It will be more worthwhile, if food policy can be assimilated with appropriate poverty reduction strategies. Some directions can be suggested here:

Population Control or Making it Asset

Government must take initiatives to maintain the capacity to produce and import the food for all. Bangladesh is an overpopulated country; therefore, poverty is both the major causes and consequences of overpopulation in Bangladesh. To ensure food security, poverty must be eradicated by controlling population. On the other hand, the government can turn this large scale of population into asset making them skilled through education, vocational training etc. Therefore, this skilled population can run the economy of the Bangladesh towards the target of achieving food security.

Making Best Effort for Agricultural Development

Agriculture is the core source of making food secured population in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, marginal farmers are very vulnerable to food security being poor in terms of land and capital. To eradicate poverty among the farmers, government must address who really needs subsidies and agricultural assistance. Technology should be available to poor farmers.

New dimensions can be thought to reduce poverty from landless and poor farmer. In disaster or in seasonal change, they have lack of work. These instances are also identical in Northern areas where people are suffering from *Monga*. In this case, monthly minimum wage can be given to landless and marginal farmers since most of them are day labourers.

Shrinking Incidence of Regional Poverty

In order to reduce regional poverty; creation of alternative jobs, decentralisation process and vocational training can be fruitful. Food security must be seen through the lens of risk and capacity management in disaster, flood and drought prone areas. Production of food and livestock is frequently hampered in these areas. Food bank, proper water supply and shelters for livestock's can be initiated by several development organizations and related branch of government. To reach another poor group that is indigenous people in Bangladesh, especially in hill tracks mainstreaming them to equal opportunities in employment and education is essential.

Overcoming Shortfalls of Microcredit

Bangladesh is well known for its microcredit scheme. It is contributing to eradicate poverty and empowerment of women through creation of employment opportunities and social mobility. Poor people are investing microcredit as well as women are now becoming economically developed. Their well being are enriching through making future

assets. However, all this good will is turning into paradox due to time constraints of investing and repaying the loan, high interest rate, lack of control over this credit by women and improper utilization of this loan. Moreover, credits including agricultural credit are being given to those who have minimum ability to give collateral. Subsequently, to make microcredit into effective and fruitful, government should ensure the accountability and transparency of these microfinance organizations in Bangladesh. Proper monitoring should be implemented for appropriate utilization of this loan by poor people. High interest rate must be lower so that poor people do not fall into the trap of poverty. Finally, agricultural credit must reach to the marginalised and landless people.

To Get Rid of Women's Poverty Face

Visibility of women must be ensured through recognising women as farmer and contributors in agriculture. However, for this they can be given identity card. Household chores must be counted in GDP. Gender awareness only can be achieved from the bottom of family, society and state. All over the world including Bangladesh, quality and equity of women can be gained through the initiation of gender sensitiveness into all strata of society i.e. in education curriculum, job sectors; both formal and informal and supreme level of legal practice.

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Annex

Mojibur Rahman is a forty year's old man. He has been living Nabinagar, Savar with his two sons, one daughter and his wife. He migrated from Natore to Dhaka in 1980 in search of job. Although, he had a little piece of land to cultivate, he wanted a job so that he would be able to manage his family properly. For these reason, he took the job of gardener in the national monument at Savar. He told, *'I can't manage them good dress as they are to give books which are costly'. After maintaining my son's education and other things, I have a little amount of money to spend for food. We just eat to live', He said. Sometimes I and my wife have to stay taking only smashed potato or Dal. We mostly have cheap vegetables rarely have fishes or meats, milk or egg. We eat egg occasionally and milk when anyone falls in sickness. We just feed milk and egg etc. to the ill child. Some days ago, my five years old daughter falls in severe fever. She had to be taken to doctor. Doctor prescribed some costly medicine for her. Therefore, for a few days, we could not manage vegetable for both husband and wife. Sometimes, we stay on having dry food like chira, muri etc'.*

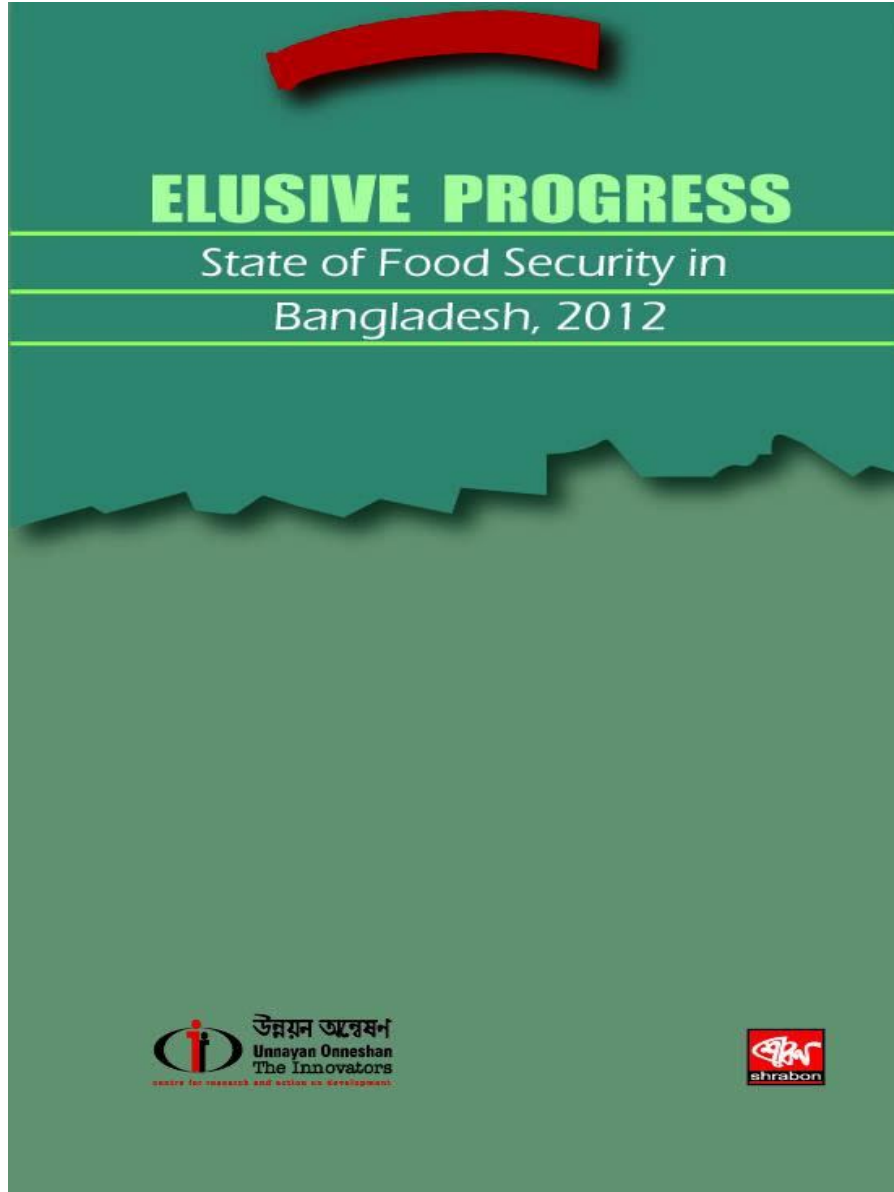
-You do not take fruits? He was asked.

-*'Yes, sometimes –that are sold on footpath, rotten and cheaper'* he answered.

-Since your whole family is suffering from lack of nutritious food- do you feel weakness frequently? Again, he was asked.

-He answered, *'we all are going through this condition. We don't think of nutrition but food three times in a day for all the members. Nutrition is the matter of concern for rich, it's not for us. Every Political party promises us to improve our condition before election but no one remember their promise after being elected'.*

At the end of the day, in Bangladesh service workers are suffering from extreme poverty which makes them insecured from triple side: access, production and utilisation of food on this occasion.



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