



MEDIA RELEASE

WFP Launches Urban Households Food Security Study

Dhaka, Sunday, 9 April 2006: WFP launched urban food security study today to develop a food security profile and to have a better understanding of the nature and trends in the food security of urban poor in Bangladesh.

Under this research project principal data will be collected through a representative household survey of households dwelling in slum areas in the four cities, Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna.

Announcing the study in Dhaka WFP Representative, Douglas Broderick said, “ *With the urban food security study, the understanding of the hunger and food security in Bangladesh will be much more comprehensive. The study I hope would help our development partners and GoB agencies in targeting their development interventions for the urban poor.*”

WFP will undertake this new urban food security study with BBS and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), USA. The principal investigator of the study Mr. Todd Benson of IFPRI, today in a workshop, held at IDB Bhaban, has informed the audience that three analyses would be undertaken using the survey data, food security profile of urban slum dwellers, small area estimation of food security status, and modelling the determinants of food security for urban slum households.

WFP in collaboration with Planning Commission and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) undertook a rural food security study in 2004. The study identified 150 upazillas out of 490 with very high rates of poverty, where more than 45% population consume less than 1805 kcal per capita per day. Malnutrition rates in Bangladesh are amongst the highest in the world. Approximately 50 % of children under five have been found stunted and underweight.

The research team shared the draft questionnaire with the participants in the workshop. The questionnaire contains modules on household composition, education, employment and occupations, housing, food expenditures, non-food expenditures, ownership of durable goods, urban agriculture, gifts and loan received or given, other income and participation in social programmes, food purchasing and eating habits, subjective assessment of well-being, recent shocks to households welfare community participation. The findings and data of the study will be publicly disseminated in Bangladesh in October and November 2006.

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NOTE TO THE EDITORS:

Based on previously done food security study WFP has produced Food Security Atlas of Bangladesh that contains a series of thematic maps such as on health, education, agriculture, demography, infrastructure etc. including Relative Food Security and Poverty maps.

- 1. The Relative Food Insecurity Map** is based on the concept of food security, which takes into account the availability of food, access to food, utilization of food and the vulnerability context. A consultative process, that involved experts from a wide range of institutions, was followed to identify main food security issues and a key set of indicators. Ten indicators were finally selected and combined into an index providing a measure of the relative status of food insecurity for every upazila in the country. Of particular concern are areas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Sylhet Haor Basin, the Northern Chars, the North West, and the Coastal belt.
- 2. The Poverty Map** was developed by applying a statistical method called the small area estimation technique, pioneered by the World Bank. This method combines census data with survey data to generate poverty and malnutrition indicators at the sub-district level. A five percent sample of the 2001 population census was used in combination with the 2000 Household Income and Expenditure Survey to derive the poverty incidence, gap and severity at the Upazila level. These indicators of poverty were highly correlated and therefore a single poverty map showing the proportion of population below the lower poverty line captures most of the information on the geographic distribution of poverty. A reasonable level of accuracy was achieved to justify comparison between upazilas, with an average standard error of about 4 percent. The poorest areas are found in the Northwest, and the districts of Mymensingh, Netrakona, Bhola and Bandarban.
- 3. The Union Level Poverty Map** provides estimates on the probability of a high incidence of extreme poverty at the union level. As the map is at a finer level – union rather than upazila – the standard error of the poverty estimate is likely to be higher. The map therefore incorporates information on the accuracy as well as the estimates of poverty themselves by expressing it in probability terms. It expresses the likelihood that the union has an extreme poverty incidence that exceeds 30 percent. Thus when targeting aid we could focus on those unions we believe have the greatest chance of exceeding a pre-chosen threshold level of 30 percent.
- 4. The Resource Allocation Map** was derived by multiplying the average poverty gap by the total upazila population. It shows the total resources (in taka/month) required by upazila to bring all the extreme poor up to the level of the lower poverty line. It assumes that there are no additional costs involved in transferring these resources to the extreme poor. This assumption is of course unrealistic, however the map provides us a useful indication of the likely cost involved by upazila to achieve the MDG / PRSP goal of eliminating extreme poverty.
- 5. The Stunting Map** expresses the probability that a high prevalence (50 %) of stunted children under five years of age can be found in the respective upazilas. Stunting or height for age is a measure of chronic malnutrition. It is particular severe in the coastal belt as well as in the Northern districts of Mymensingh, Netrokana and Sunamganj.
- 6. The Underweight Map** shows, in a similar way as for the stunting map, the likelihood of finding a high incidence (50%) of underweight children under five years of age in the respective upazilas. Underweight or weight for age is a reflection of both chronic malnutrition and acute malnutrition. It is defined as a current condition resulting from inadequate food intake, past episodes of under nutrition, or poor health conditions.