Bangladesh: WFP Assistance in 2012

Emergency Assistance, 2012
District
Upazila
Bandarban
Alkastam
Bandarban
Lama
Bandarban
Nalikongchhari
Bandarban
Rowangchhari
Bandarban
Ruma
Bandarban
Thanchi
Jessore
Keshabpur
Rangamati
Baghaichhuri
Sathkhira
Asiddikhi
Sathkhira
Debhata
Sathkhira
Kalaroa
Sathkhira
Satkhira
Sathkhira
Tala

Improving Maternal and Child Nutrition (IMCN)
School Feeding (SF)
Enhancing Resilience to Natural Disasters and the Effects of Climate Change (ER)
Food Security for the Ultra Poor (FSUP) and Enhancing Food Security (EFS)
WFP-IFPRI Transfer Modality Research (TMRI)
Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO)
Joint UN Programme (MDG-F)

Emergency Assistance is shown as per the activities implemented, i.e. under IMCN and ER.

Administrative Boundary
International Boundary
Division Boundary
District Boundary
Major Rivers / Ocean

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: World Food Programme
Map produced by WFM Unit, WFP Bangladesh, 22 Oct. 2013.
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2012 was a year of new beginnings. Both the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2012-2016) and the new WFP Country Programme (2012-2016) started this year. Aligned with the national development agenda, the UNDAF outlines the priorities of UN work, while the WFP Country Programme details how we will support the Government of Bangladesh to achieve significant gains in reducing hunger and undernutrition.

Throughout 2012 and 2013, WFP engaged in dialogue, evidence creation and capacity support to the Government to mainstream food security and nutrition targets into national social safety nets, and to make some of them more promotional for the ultra-poor. Our vision is to see the poorest move out of extreme poverty and progress towards long-term food security and adequate nutrition.

With the WFP Food Security for the Ultra-Poor project coming to a very successful close in 2012, we are excited to apply the lessons learned to the Enhancing Resilience to Natural Disasters and the Effects of Climate Change programme implemented jointly with the Government. In an additional programme year, women from households participating in food and cash for work and training now receive a cash grant and monthly allowance, as under Food Security for the Ultra Poor.

WFP continues to break new ground. In the Transfer Modality Research conducted together with IFPRI, we measure the income, food security and child nutrition outcomes of different social safety net transfers to ultra-poor women, combined with maternal and child nutrition training. WFP has also started a trial in two food-based safety nets to assess the acceptability of rice fortified with essential micronutrients, and a study with Johns Hopkins University to determine the effectiveness of locally produced specialized nutritious food that can be used to prevent and treat undernutrition in small children.

We have been delighted to witness the massive scale-up of the government-funded and -managed School Feeding in poverty prone areas. The Government now delivers school feeding to more pre- and primary school students than we do. School Feeding was delivered together with services in the areas of nutrition, health and agriculture under the Joint UN Programme Protecting and Promoting Food Security and Nutrition for Families and Children in Bangladesh (2010-2013), which WFP, FAO and UNICEF implemented together. The lessons from this programme, which, among other benefits, substantially reduced chronic child undernutrition in targeted areas, will guide us in our future joint efforts on food security and nutrition under the UNDAF.

For the coming year, we look forward to continue working with the Government and development partners to gradually and sustainably increase government ownership of jointly implemented programmes, and assisting the Government in strengthening the design and business processes of some of their social safety nets.

Christa Räder
Representative
World Food Programme Bangladesh

### Facts and figures

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of people assisted across all programmes</td>
<td>1,882,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of school children assisted</td>
<td>1,087,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and cash for work participants</td>
<td>82,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training participants</td>
<td>246,612</td>
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<td>Metric tons of food distributed</td>
<td>28,573</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash distributed (under Food Security for the Ultra-Poor (FSUP), Enhancing Food Security (EFS) and in emergencies) in US$</td>
<td>5,786,190</td>
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2012 at a Glance

30,000 women lifted their families out of extreme poverty. Read how they did it on page 12.

105,700 young children received specialized nutritious food from WFP to prevent and treat undernutrition. Read more on page 6.

1,848 communities built assets that help protect their homes and fields from natural disasters and the effects of climate change. Read more on page 10.

2.3 million schoolchildren ate a nutritious snack every day they attended class. More than half of these kids were supported by the government following a successful scale-up. Read more on page 8.

12,500 families improved their nutrition and food security in the long term, with assistance from a Joint UN Programme. Read more on page 20.
Over recent decades, Bangladesh has achieved significant progress in the reduction of child undernutrition, with the proportion of underweight children under the age of five reduced from 68 percent in 1992 to 36 percent in 2011.

However, Bangladesh still has some of the highest undernutrition rates in the world: 41 percent of children between six months and five years of age — approximately seven million children — suffer from chronic undernutrition (stunting), the effects of which last a lifetime, and 16 percent are acutely undernourished (wasted), too thin for their height (Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) 2011). Concerted multisectoral and multi-stakeholder efforts are required to successfully address the nutrition challenge.

**New WFP Nutrition Strategy**

WFP released its Nutrition Strategy for Bangladesh in April 2012 to support the Government to reduce maternal and child undernutrition and contribute to breaking the intergenerational cycle of undernutrition.

In 2012, Australia (through UNICEF), the European Union, Japan and corporate partner Tilda Ltd. provided funding for Improving Maternal and Child Nutrition. WFP carries out activities through government health structures to ensure ownership and sustainability. The focus is on the first 1,000 days, from conception to two years of age, when a lack of nutrients impacts the development of brain and body for a lifetime. Nutrition interventions during this time can have an immediate and long-term effect on children’s growth, health, learning ability, future productivity and income earning potential.

**Involving communities to boost nutrition**

WFP ensures villagers become actively involved in improving nutrition outcomes in their communities. In door to door visits, community health workers have identified undernourished children aged 6-59 months, pregnant women and nursing mothers, and have enrolled them in the programme.

Severely undernourished children are referred for medical treatment, while moderately undernourished children receive Super Cereal Plus, a specialized nutritious food made from wheat, soya, oil, milk powder and sugar, fortified with essential vitamins and minerals. Women receive oil and Super Cereal, a wheat-soya flour mixed with sugar and micronutrients.

The Super Cereal Plus is cooked and eaten every day in addition to normal food. Children usually recover within 2.5 months. Pregnant women and nursing mothers remain enrolled in the programme until six months after delivery to ensure their baby’s nutritional needs are covered in the womb and during the period of exclusive breastfeeding.

**Promoting good nutrition practices**

Behaviour change communication on nutrition, infant feeding, hygiene and sanitation practices complements the food distribution. The sessions include mothers and other caretakers of undernourished children as well as other household and community members.

385 health facilities were covered under the programme. 105,679 children aged 6 months to 5 years of age, and 27,378 pregnant women, nursing mothers and adolescent girls received specialized food to help them get the nutrition they need for themselves and their babies.
746 women participated in sessions to learn how to ensure good health and nutrition, especially during pregnancy and for young children.

133,057 community health workers and staff of partner organizations were trained to distribute specialized nutritious food and deliver information on nutrition, infant feeding, hygiene and sanitation practices.

**A New Life**

Jharna Rani has turned her life around. With her husband and her twin girls Mala and Jhinuk she used to live in a shed with a leaking roof, was unable to afford three meals a day, and ate meat less than once a month. As a participant in the EU-funded Food Security for the Ultra-Poor (FSUP) project, Jharna saved enough money to fix her house, provide three nutritious meal a day to her family and even help relatives.

When Mala and Jhinuk were screened by a community health volunteer, Mala was found to be too thin and enrolled in the FSUP-Nutrition programme under IMCN activities.

“After three months, my child was cured”, Jharna tells us proudly. “I also learned a lot from the programme, for example how important hand washing is for the children and for myself. I learned which foods are rich in important nutrients. Now I give my daughters bananas, milk and eggs regularly. See for yourself how healthy they are now!”

**Highlights**

- Close to 71,000 children were enrolled in the programme in 2012 because they suffered from moderate acute undernutrition. By the end of the year more than 54,000 had fully recovered after receiving specialized nutritious food.

- Participants reported that after taking part in the programme they had a better understanding of nutrition, learned the necessity of early and exclusive breastfeeding, and said they were now eating a larger variety of food.

- Mothers said that since they received WFP’s micronutrient-fortified food, their children are visibly healthier and more active and alert than they used to be.

- Programme participants also were more aware of the services provided by government health and family welfare services. Meeting these service providers through the programme helped them become accustomed to related procedures and ultimately increased access.

- A lasting cooperation between WFP and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was established and strengthened in 2012. In 2013, this partnership was formalised with a Partnership Framework to address the persistently high rates of maternal and child undernutrition in Bangladesh.
Bangladesh has made excellent progress in terms of net school enrolment and elimination of gender disparity in education. However, 3.3 million out of 20 million children of primary school age remain out of school and only 70 percent of students complete five years of primary education. Current trends in access and completion need to improve for Bangladesh to achieve universal primary school completion by 2015.

Keeping children in school is one of the most effective ways to increase their future income earning potential and an effective strategy for delaying marriage and increasing mobility for girls. It also improves children’s chances of later having the knowledge and resources to provide enough of the right food for their own children.

Successful handover to Government

WFP works with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education to provide micronutrient-fortified biscuits to pre-primary and primary school children in high poverty prone areas.

The Government started a national school feeding programme in September 2011 which initially supported 55,000 students, reached 1.4 million children in 2012, and from March 2013 is assisting more than 1.7 million children. WFP continues to reach 1 million schoolchildren in food-insecure and poverty-prone areas.

In 2012, funding for school feeding came from Bangladesh, Australia, Spain, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), corporate donor Unilever and private donors through the Japan Association for WFP (JAWFP).

More students enroll and attend class

For families who cannot afford enough nutritious food every day, school feeding is a powerful incentive to enrol their children and ensure they attend class every day. Enrolment in targeted schools has increased by 11 percent from 2007 to 2009, and attendance rates have increased from 76 percent in 2007 to 87 percent in 2012.

The nutritious biscuits give children the energy to concentrate on their lessons and help address widespread micronutrient deficiencies. Fortified with essential vitamins and minerals, the biscuits ensure children meet 67 percent of their daily vitamin and mineral needs.

The school feeding programme also includes an essential learning package for the children as well as their parents, teachers and other community members. Activities focus on vegetable gardening, dietary diversity, health, nutrition and hygiene, and reinforcing good practices such as hand-washing.

From biscuits to cooked meals

In partnership with the Government, WFP is establishing school feeding in more schools in a sustainable way. In 2013, WFP started providing cooked meals in 41 schools in Barguna and Jamalpur, working with communities to provide a home-grown lunch instead of biscuits. Vegetables, fruit and spices are purchased from local women cultivators and cooked by women, helping entire communities to benefit from the school meals programme.

98% of children in WFP-assisted primary schools passed into the next grade in 2012.

6,789 schools in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna, Bandarban, Khagrachari, Rangamati, Cox’s Bazar and Dhaka were assisted by WFP in 2012.
Little Girl — Big Dreams

Born in coastal Bhola, nine-year-old Sajeda moved to Dhaka when her father left the family and her mother had to find work in a garment factory to support them. “When Sajeda arrived she was sick a lot and couldn’t follow the lessons”, her school teacher says.

Together with her classmates, Sajeda received fortified biscuits every day she attended school. As part of the school feeding programme Sajeda also learned how important it is to wash her hands regularly and to drink safe water.

Her teacher noticed how Sajeda benefited from the programme: “Now Sajeda is much more attentive and comes to class regularly. I am very optimistic for her future!”

Sajeda is also looking forward to being a grown-up: “I want to be a nurse. One day I will take care of sick children myself.”

Highlights

⇒ For the first time in the history of school feeding in Bangladesh, the Government delivers school feeding to more children than WFP. In 2013, the Government covers 1.7 million schoolchildren directly while WFP supports 1 million.

⇒ WFP works with the Government to strengthen the skills of government officials in managing school feeding, including monitoring and evaluation. WFP also assists in the establishment of logistics facilities in schools and in the areas of quality control and supply chain management.

⇒ Almost all fortified biscuits used in both the WFP-and Government-assisted school feeding are purchased in Bangladesh. WFP works with local suppliers to ensure the increased demand can be met while maintaining high standards of quality.

⇒ The Government continues to donate to WFP for school feeding in Bangladesh as a contribution to the United Nations. In 2012, the Government donated 18,500mt of wheat for the continuation and expansion of activities in food-insecure and poverty-prone areas.

⇒ WFP is planning to strengthen the partnership with FAO, UNICEF and Plan International to improve the essential learning package delivered alongside daily school feeding.

1,087,606 children in WFP-assisted schools received nutritious biscuits every day they attended class in 2012.

94% of teachers in WFP-assisted schools reported that their students concentrate and learn better as a result of school feeding.
Bangladesh is one of the countries most at-risk to climate change with cyclones, floods, droughts, salt water intrusion and river erosion expected to increase in frequency and severity over the coming decades. People living in the southern coastal belt and north-west flooding zones are particularly vulnerable. Severe shocks caused by floods and cyclones affect 30 to 50 percent of the country annually and offset gains in poverty reduction and agricultural production.

To improve communities’ resilience to natural disasters and the effects of climate change, and strengthen their agricultural production, WFP works with the Government of Bangladesh, community-based NGOs and Union and Upazila Disaster Management Committees to improve communities’ resilience to disasters and joint preparedness and response capabilities.

In 2012, funding was provided by Brazil, Japan and corporate partner LG Electronics. The Government of Bangladesh supported the programme with US$5.4 million for cash for work and training.

Food and cash for work and training

In 2012, 82,000 villagers, more than 70 percent of them women, completed a two-year programme during which they constructed or repaired embankments, flood and cyclone shelters, road-cum-embankments, drainage and irrigation canals, and lifted their homesteads.

The projects were identified in a local level planning process involving government officials, male and female community members and NGO staff. Together, they reviewed community needs with a focus on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation infrastructure. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) assisted in the construction and maintenance of assets and was involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

In addition to asset creation, WFP provided training on disaster risk reduction planning, climate change adaptation and survival during crises as well as marketable post-disaster skills useful to generate income. The participants also learned practical life skills in the areas of nutrition, hygiene and health. For the time and effort invested in work and training, remuneration was given in food and cash where WFP provided a diversified food basket and the Government, through LGED, provided the equivalent value in cash.

Building economic resilience

Self-employment will need to play an important role in sustaining and accelerating the gains made at household level. Therefore, in a third programme year, 18,000 women from participating households are now trained on developing a small business and receive a 12,000 taka cash grant for investment as well as a monthly cash transfer of 500 taka for consumption support. The monthly payment allows them to grow their investment and build their families’ economic resilience while covering their families’ day-to-day needs.

In 2013, a new programme cycle started with another 80,000 participants building community assets and their own capacity to withstand disasters.

70% of participants during the first two years of the programme were women.

1,168 km of embankment-cum-roads were constructed by women and men seeking to protect their homes and fields from floods, and to improve their access to markets, schools and services in the vicinity.
A Way Out of Poverty

Fatema Begum, a 33-year-old mother of two, knows the destruction a cyclone can cause first hand. “We had to swim through the water, holding each other’s hands, to get to the area shelter”, she recalls her family’s ordeal after Cyclone Aila struck her community in 2009.

With help from WFP, she and her neighbours came together and moved tons of earth to raise the foundations of their village so that their houses and gardens would be safer from floodwaters.

The programme also helped change the villagers’ perception of a woman’s role in society. Before the project, women mainly worked hidden inside their homes. Now they have the confidence to seek work outside.

“Our husbands support us”, a group of female participants agrees. “They see we help our families by working outside and earning money. So now they encourage us to do paid work whenever we can find it.”

Highlights

⇒ Pulses and oil were introduced to make food rations, which also include rice, more diversified and nutritious.

⇒ The Enhancing Resilience programme empowered 56,000 ultra-poor women to seek employment outside of the home. With an opportunity to earn regular wages, and armed with new knowledge and skills, women are exercising more control over income and resources and are contributing to decisions that determine their families’ future.

⇒ Mostly women were elected to lead the “Participants’ Groups” that consult with NGOs, help implement the programme and organize cash and food distributions. As elected leaders, women play an important role in representing their peers, and are recognised as contributing to their communities.

⇒ Once heavily bureaucratic, the cash transfer has been streamlined so participants are now paid faster. WFP continues to trial alternative cash transfer methods. In the third programme year, women receive grants for investment and monthly allowances through their individual bank accounts.

⇒ For the first time, WFP arranged provision of childcare, sheds, access to drinking water and sanitation facilities at all food and cash for work sites. These efforts were highly praised by the communities and workers.

5.6 community resilience score at the end of the programme, up from 1.2 at the onset. Resilience is assessed by looking at infrastructure and vulnerability to disasters.

410,000 people benefited from the food and cash wages paid to programme participants in 2012.
The Government of Bangladesh recognises social protection as a core area of its Poverty Reduction Strategy. According to the 2012-13 budget, 38.7 million people were covered by social safety nets. But studies suggest that national safety nets suffer from substantial duplication, leakage and inefficient targeting.

Promotional safety nets enable ultra-poor women and their families to graduate out of extreme poverty and improve their food security and nutrition so that they need less assistance in future.

WFP supports the Government to strengthen existing safety nets and contributes with evidence to the on-going development of a Social Protection Strategy. Capacity support units were established in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.

Food Security for the Ultra-Poor (FSUP)

The EU-funded FSUP project, which concluded in 2012, supported 30,000 ultra-poor women in disaster-prone Pabna, Sirajganj, and Bogra districts to become entrepreneurs and improve their income and food security.

The women took part in training on entrepreneurial skills, income generation, disaster preparedness and nutrition. To put this knowledge to use, they received a 14,000 taka cash grant, and a monthly cash allowance over two years to meet their basic family needs.

At the end of the project, the average monthly income of participants had increased five-fold, savings had more than quadrupled and household assets had tripled. The women’s families consumed more and a wider range of food, reducing the likelihood of their children becoming undernourished.

MoWCA is now seeking to integrate the experience gained from the project into their Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Programme, one of the largest social safety nets in the country exclusively targeting women.

Supporting VGD

WFP supports MoWCA to strengthen policies and programme design for effective implementation, and to enhance systems, tools and staff capacities in managing VGD. Joint analyses and trainings provided for staff in the Ministry and partnering NGOs focus on participant targeting, NGO management, monitoring, evaluation and results-oriented reporting.

A joint assessment of the VGD programme initiated in 2012 has served to identify strengths, challenges and opportunities for the future.

Transfer Modality Research Initiative

The Transfer Modality Research Initiative (TMRI) is a joint effort of WFP and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), supported and guided by the Government of Bangladesh, and funded by Germany, Switzerland, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States of America.

The study will determine the benefits of five different types and combinations of transfers — including cash, food, and nutrition behavioural change communication (BCC) — with regard to three critical outcomes: household income, food security, and child nutrition.

As Bangladesh moves towards finalizing its Social Protection Strategy, this research is expected to generate important evidence for policy makers and practitioners.

435 staff from the Department of Women Affairs and from NGOs involved in VGD were trained on programme implementation.

4,000 ultra-poor women with small children in the north-west and southern coastal areas of Bangladesh are receiving a monthly transfer under the Transfer Modality Research Initiative.
A Story of Strength and Hope

Nasima and her family live in a remote village in north-west Bangladesh. Two years ago her family could not afford to eat regular meals.

Nasima received a cash grant and monthly allowance through the EU-funded WFP Food Security for the Ultra Poor project. Applying knowledge and skills gained from entrepreneurship training, and strength and support from her women’s self-help group, Nasima invested her cash grant in a bull to fatten it and sell later on. She reinvested the profit to lease farm land where she grew crops which her family could consume, thus increasing their nutritional wellbeing.

Encouraged by the success of her endeavours, Nasima used her profits to purchase a micro-bus for her husband Anwar. Anwar now contributes 10 times more to the household income than he did earlier as a rickshaw driver, and channels his earnings through Nasima. He is proud to support his wife. Together they form a strong partnership.

Highlights

⇒ Interventions based on the success and lessons learned from FSUP are already implemented in the AusAID-supported Enhancing Food Security project assisting 700 ultra-poor women and their families in Cox’s Bazar.

⇒ WFP adapted the Enhancing Resilience to Natural Disasters and the Effects of Climate Change programme to include the most successful components of FSUP (see page 10).

⇒ Throughout 2012, more than 2,000 government and NGO partners received technical assistance and training from WFP.

⇒ WFP contributed to the modification of the VGD implementation guideline and selection criteria for NGOs.

⇒ The VGD food distribution practice was reviewed and a strategic outline prepared including a guideline on gender-sensitive qualitative process and performance monitoring.

⇒ WFP is partnering with BRAC to build on their long-running and highly successful promotional social safety net project ‘Targeting the Ultra Poor’ (TUP) to break the intergenerational cycle of hunger and undernutrition. Funded by Unilever, the joint project will target women who are pregnant or have a child under the age of 12 months, take a livelihoods approach to assist them to move out of extreme poverty, and aim at preventing child undernutrition.

67,960 taka was the average value of total household assets after women participated in FSUP — tripled from 21,100 taka at the start of the project.

400% increase in average income was reached by women who participated in the FSUP project.
Responding to Emergencies

In close cooperation with the Government and local NGOs, WFP provided emergency assistance in two areas that are especially vulnerable to food insecurity and undernutrition: the southern coastal belt suffering from frequent storms, tidal surges, waterlogging and soil salinity; and the remote, mountainous Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), where most people live from shifting cultivation which produces low yields and is vulnerable to pests and extreme weather.

Floods and water-logging in Satkhira

In 2011, strong rains in south-west Bangladesh flooded fields and villages for several months, leaving thousands of people stranded with their livestock and farmland lost.

After an initial emergency response and distributions of nutritious food and cash to 150,000 people in the subsequent months, made possible thanks to funding from the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department of the European Commission (ECHO) and the British Department for International Development (DFID), WFP worked with further funding from ECHO to help 63,000 people rebuild their lives and become more resilient to disasters.

Villagers identified cash-for-work schemes that would protect them and help increase agricultural yields: They re-excavated canals, re-built and strengthened embankments and raised roads. In cash-for-training activities they learned how to prepare for and react to disasters, acquired good nutrition and hygiene practices and learned how to establish gardens to boost their families’ nutrition.

In 2012, the rains fell as heavy as the year before and WFP supported 17,500 people with nutritious food and cash for three months, but thanks to the improved canals and dams the extent of water-logging was limited.

Food Insecurity in the Hill Tracts

Food insecurity persisted and increased throughout 2011 and early 2012. In Sajek Union of Rangamati District, rodents and wild pigs damaged crops while at the same time, the price of turmeric, a main cash crop, fell by more than 60 percent. In addition, communal disputes led to a ban on shifting cultivation in some areas. In Remakri Union of Thanchi Upazila in Bandarban District, a rodent outbreak in previous years continued to impact villagers in remote areas with very limited access to casual labour. In addition, torrential rains in 2012 caused flooding and landslides in parts of Bandarban District.

A WFP assessment showed that food and seed stocks were exhausted and many families were eating less food, less often: 99 percent of households had poor and borderline food consumption – levels not seen in Bangladesh in decades. A food security and nutrition assessment conducted by Helen Keller International in CHT confirmed Sajek and Thanchi to be the worst-off areas.

With funding from ECHO, WFP assisted 42,500 people with rations including rice, oil and cash, allowing families to add foods of their choice to meet their needs. Households also received a one-off cash grant which most families invested in seeds and fertilizer.

In October 2012, most households ate three meals a day and the harvest enabled them to stock food for 3-4 months.

Specialized food for the most vulnerable

Undernutrition is especially harmful in the first 1,000 days of life, from conception to two years of age, when it can impact physical and mental development for a lifetime. In every emergency response, WFP seeks to ensure pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children get all the nutrients they need to stay strong and healthy.

In Satkhira and CHT, WFP distributed Super Cereal, a wheat-soya flour fortified with essential vitamins and minerals that is easily used in local recipes. Community sessions were held to raise awareness and improve practices in the areas of nutrition, sanitation and hygiene.

In Satkhira, trained community volunteers monitored the nutrition status of children under the age of five to ensure every undernourished child received treatment, and conducted follow-up home visits to support households.

9,600 people participated in cash-for-work activities from March until June 2012 in Satkhira.

2,000 taka one-off cash grants in CHT helped families to purchase agricultural inputs and get a better harvest.
From Flood Victim to Vegetable Seller

Jesmin Begum lives in Satkhira together with her husband and her two children. Her community suffered from prolonged flooding after heavy rains were not drained quickly enough by a nearby canal.

Together with her community, Jesmin re-excavated the canal, and received cash for her labour. She also took part in cash-for-training, where, among other things, she learned about homestead gardening.

With the cash and knowledge she received, Jesmin planted a small garden next to her house. Aside from using her vegetables in the meals she prepares for her family, she also gains some income by selling them to neighbours.

“The income from the garden now helps us pay for the kids’ schoolbooks and clothes,” she says proudly.

Highlights

⇒ Families used the cash wages they received on essential food and non-food items, seeds and agricultural inputs as well as school items for their children, proving that in areas with functional markets, cash can be a valuable addition to food rations in emergencies that helps people ensure their long-term food security and nutrition.

⇒ The raised roads and embankments improved under cash-for-work schemes in Satkhira have been included in the regular maintenance schedule of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), and the canals are now monitored by the Bangladesh Water Development Board, ensuring their upkeep and long-term beneficial impact for communities in the area.

⇒ Gender-sensitive provisions, such as child-care services, were incorporated to facilitate women’s equal access to employment in cash-for-work schemes. Pregnant women and nursing mothers were enrolled in additional cash for training instead of cash for work.

⇒ In CHT, prices in 20 markets were regularly collected as part of overall monitoring. In remote areas, people have limited choice of markets and high food prices can exacerbate the already precarious food and nutrition situation of ultra-poor families.

98% of people in assisted areas in CHT reported that their access to food had improved when the project ended.

32km of canals were re-excavated by people participating in cash-for-work activities in Satkhira, improving water drainage and cultivation possibilities for eight unions.
WFP works in strong partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs to provide food assistance to 24,500 registered refugees from Myanmar living in Kutupalong and Nayapara refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar District. Due to restrictions on movement and employment, most refugees have no regular income and are highly dependent on assistance. WFP is the only organization providing comprehensive food assistance inside the camps, with funding received in 2012 from Australia, Canada, the United States of America, and private donors through JAWFP.

Nutritious food rations

All registered refugees receive a general ration of rice, pulses, oil, sugar, salt and Super Cereal, a wheat-soya flour fortified with vitamins and minerals, to meet their basic caloric and nutrition requirements.

To reduce undernutrition during the critical first 1,000 days of life, when it can damage brains and bodies for a lifetime, an extra ration of Super Cereal, oil and sugar is given to pregnant women, nursing mothers, children aged six months to two years, and moderately acutely undernourished children up to the age of five.

In December 2012, Super Cereal Plus was introduced for children. The wheat-soya-based flour contains milk powder, sugar and micronutrients, and only needs to be mixed and cooked with water to help children get the nutrients they need to stay strong and healthy.

Nutrition education

While the rate of acute undernutrition among children aged six months to five years was reduced from 2011 levels, the situation remains serious. Next to food insecurity, inadequate practices in the areas of child care, water, sanitation and hygiene are key causes for persistent undernutrition. To improve knowledge, attitudes and practices, WFP’s partner organization Action Against Hunger (ACF) provides nutrition training in conjunction with food distributions for mothers and young children. The sessions are very well received, with more women and other caregivers for small children than planned attending to improve the health and nutrition of their families.

School feeding boosts primary education

To increase access to education, WFP provides micronutrient-fortified biscuits to children in primary and pre-schools as well as older children in non-formal primary education. The snacks encourage students to attend class, give them the energy to focus, and cover part of their micronutrient needs.

Way forward

While a regional approach will be required to resolve the refugee situation, a joint impact evaluation conducted by WFP and UNHCR on ‘The Contribution of Food Assistance to Durable Solutions in Protracted Refugee Situations’ recommended that the Government and UN in Bangladesh examine a comprehensive package of long-term solutions within the area where the refugee camps are located.

A Joint Assessment Mission which WFP and UNHCR led together with the Government in Kutupalong and Nayapara camps called for the registration of confirmed refugees living inside the camps, and improved management of food entitlements. The assessment report also recommended direct food distributions to be replaced by a combination of vouchers and food transfers.

WFP is currently pursuing the option of issuing electronic vouchers which can be used to purchase certain food items from traders inside the camps, enabling refugees to obtain locally available fresh foods that have high nutritious value and meet their preference.

92% improvement in knowledge on health and nutrition issues was achieved by women participating in nutrition education, compared to when they entered the programme.

7,928 boys and girls received micronutrient-fortified biscuits every day they attended school inside the refugee camps.
Life as a refugee

Twenty-four-year-old Sufia Begum (name changed) has lived in a refugee camp since she came to Bangladesh with her parents when she was three.

“Most of my early memories are here in the camp. But I heard about the sufferings of Rohingyas in Myanmar from my parents,” she says. “If there is no hope, if the situation does not improve in Myanmar, we cannot go back.”

Today, Sufia has a family of her own. “We need the WFP food rations to survive,” she says. My husband only finds little work in the camp. It is hard to manage the family.”

When she was pregnant, Sufia enrolled in the WFP nutrition programme, and her children received Super Cereal when they were younger. Her oldest children now get micronutrient-fortified biscuits in school, gaining an education to help lift the family out of poverty one day.

Highlights

⇒ WFP-funded events inside the refugee camps included community-based awareness raising activities for World Breastfeeding Week, a ‘family cooking competition’ and interactive community theatre promoting adolescent girls’ and women’s rights.

⇒ WFP is committed to contribute to progress towards gender equality. Women are given priority when collecting food rations and separate queues are established. Almost one-third of food distribution volunteers are women, and WFP ensures separate latrines for them. Women and men are equally represented on food management committees.

⇒ WFP works closely with partners to ensure refugees receive the support they need. UNHCR continues to provide basic non-food items, such as shelter, blankets, cooking utensils and firewood. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare provides out-patient and in-patient health services and de-worming tablets.

⇒ WFP is providing fortified biscuits to 4-year-old refugee children attending 21 “Kajoli” pre-school learning centres. The centres are community-run, use innovative learning methods and provide a stimulating environment to play and learn. Following the introduction of micronutrient-fortified biscuits, attendance increased from 70 to 80-85 percent.

4,590 caregivers of young children acquired knowledge and skills in nutrition trainings to help improve the health and nutrition of their families.

21 schools inside the refugee camps provided WFP’s micronutrient-fortified biscuits to students every day they attended classes.
Low dietary diversity remains a challenge in Bangladesh and deficiencies in Vitamin A, iron, zinc, iodine, vitamin B12 and folate are widespread, with the poorest people most affected. The Bangladesh Poverty Assessment (2013) by the World Bank showed no significant change in dietary diversity even as the country experienced a significant decline in poverty.

The National Micronutrient Survey (2013) concluded that “the population of Bangladesh is still well short of the Daily Recommended Allowance of food intake for key micronutrients.”

Fortification of staple food and specialized nutritious food supplements provided during the first 1,000 days of life are two effective ways to ensure that those most at risk of vitamin and mineral deficiencies, such as women and children, receive the nutrients they need.

Complementary Food Supplement

During the first six months after birth, exclusive breastfeeding is essential to ensure children get all the nutrients they need and are protected from diarrhoea and other diseases. After that period, breast milk is still required but is no longer enough to meet the infant’s nutritional needs, and complementary foods should be added to the child’s diet.

This period, from 6 to 24 months of age, is when undernutrition starts in many infants, contributing significantly to the high prevalence of undernutrition in children under five years of age. Complementary Food Supplements (CFS) given in addition to breast milk and other foods can help ensure children get all the nutrients they need during this critical time for their lifelong development.

In a research partnership of Johns Hopkins University, ICDDR,B, global science company DSM and WFP, two locally produced CFS products are tested for their acceptability – how well children aged 6-24 months like to eat the CFS – and effectiveness – how well the CFS prevents stunting and wasting, and improves micronutrient status and cognition. One CFS is based on rice and lentils, the other on chickpeas, and both contain milk powder, sugar, oil and micronutrients.

If the local products prove effective, WFP plans to integrate them into its Improving Maternal and Child Nutrition (IMCN) WFP-assisted emergency responses and government nutrition and safety net programmes. WFP will also help establish high quality CFS production capacity within Bangladesh, and explore options to make CFS available in the local market.
Rice is Bangladesh’s most important staple food; it is the largest part of most people’s daily diet. Regular milled and polished rice is low in micronutrients and serves primarily as a source of carbohydrates. Fortified rice – *Pushti Chal* – can deliver essential vitamins and minerals missing in many people’s meals, and can help ensure people get the nutrients they need for an active and healthy life.

*Pushti Chal* is made by blending micronutrient kernels that look, cook and taste like rice with ordinary rice at a ratio of 1 to 100. Global science company DSM supplies the micronutrient powder which is mixed with rice flour to produce the kernels, as well as the technical expertise to produce them. WFP works with local millers for blending, and plans to support the production of fortified kernels within Bangladesh. Production at a large scale will reduce the additional cost for fortified rice versus ordinary rice so that even the poorest can afford it.

WFP partners with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to test the acceptability of *Pushti Chal* in their Vulnerable Group Feeding and Vulnerable Group Development programmes. Distributions started in June 2013 in Kurigram and in August 2013 in Satkhira for the initial phase, reaching 9,000 recipients in total.

After three months, a representative sample of recipients of fortified rice will be interviewed on how the fortified rice compares to regular rice in terms of taste, smell, look, storage and cooking practices. The results of this acceptability trial, conducted by BRAC, are expected by the end of 2013. Thereafter, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has agreed to support an expansion to 500,000 recipients.

WFP plans to integrate fortified rice into all WFP-assisted programmes, and will encourage garment factory owners to offer fortified rice in their canteens or sell it at concessional rates as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes to address micronutrient deficiencies of women garment workers.

WFP will also assist the Government to mainstream fortified rice into their food-based social safety net programmes. As the main commodity distributed through the Government’s social safety nets, *Pushti Chal* can help address widespread micronutrient deficiencies among the poorest of the poor. In the long run, WFP aims to make *Pushti Chal* available in the market so that all people in Bangladesh can benefit.
A multi-sectoral approach to nutrition is required to ensure that all children grow up to lead active, healthy and productive lives. Nutrition-sensitive interventions incorporate nutrition goals and actions across a wide range of sectors including health, agriculture and education.

Collaboration between the Government of Bangladesh, UN agencies, national and international NGOs, research institutions and representations of donor countries is necessary to ensure that expertise, skills and funding are available and used effectively, and to ensure commitment at the highest levels of government is followed by the implementation of nutrition-sensitive as well as nutrition-specific programmes involving all relevant sectors to reduce undernutrition in Bangladesh.

Nutrition Research

To advance knowledge and contribute evidence in the area of food security and nutrition, WFP collaborates with a number of national and international research institutions and universities. Given the high rates of child undernutrition, it is important to understand which kinds of social safety net interventions can contribute to a reduction in child undernutrition.

In a joint effort, WFP and IFPRI, supported and guided by the Government of Bangladesh, are implementing the Transfer Modality Research Initiative (TMRI), a rigorous experimental research designed to determine the benefits of different types and combinations of social safety net transfers with regard to household income, food security, and child nutrition (see page 12). Each participant received a mobile phone and in the research groups that include a cash transfer, participants receive their entitlement using this technology.

WFP also works with Johns Hopkins University and the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B), to assess the acceptability and effectiveness of locally produced complementary food supplements in improving the nutrition of children from 6 to 24 months of age (see page 18).

Throughout 2012, independent researchers were engaged to analyse and evaluate the Food Security for the Ultra-Poor project (see page12-13), the Government’s Vulnerable Group Development programme (see page 12-13), the contribution of food assistance to durable solutions in protracted refugee situations in Bangladesh (see page 16-17), and to establish a comprehensive baseline for the WFP Country Programme for Bangladesh (2012-2016).
Coordinating Action to Beat Undernutrition

WFP supports efforts to coordinate policies that set out shared nutrition-related objectives across sectors – from expanding nutrition service delivery, to empowerment of ultra-poor women, to fortification of staple foods. These actions are being supported by strong civil society alliances and coordination across government, United Nations agencies, businesses, donors, and technical and research institutions.

WFP partners with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) under the UN REACH (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition) Initiative. Since 2011, UN REACH has been assisting Bangladesh to accelerate the scale-up of food and nutrition actions through strengthening multisectoral coordination and planning. In collaboration with major donors and development partners, UN REACH has recently developed a ‘Common Narrative for Nutrition’, which will form the basis of all joint advocacy and communications for nutrition in the coming years.

In 2012, the Government renewed its resolve to deliver nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions as a participating country of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. The SUN Movement encourages the creation of a multi-stakeholder nutrition platform and strives to involve a variety of ministries.

The Joint UN Programme Protecting and Promoting Food Security and Nutrition for Families and Children in Bangladesh (2010-2013) of FAO, UNICEF and WFP, funded by Spain under the Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund and implemented in partnership with the Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock, Food, Health and Family Welfare, Primary and Mass Education, and Women and Children Affairs, as well as several NGOs, demonstrated the benefits of joint action on nutrition.

The three-year programme focused on improving the food security and dietary diversity of participating households, their economic condition, and their knowledge, attitudes and practices in the areas of nutrition, health, hygiene, sanitation and child care. An independent evaluation conducted in 2013 praised the approach to converge activities and showed that project areas now have significantly lower rates of acute undernutrition and anaemia, and families eat a more diverse diet. School enrolment and attendance have increased significantly. The programme also delivered evidence on how the empowerment of women and nutrition education delivered to schoolchildren can contribute to reducing undernutrition.
FOCUS on our Team

As of December 2012, WFP staff working in Bangladesh came from ten different countries, but a majority, or 81 percent, were Bangladesh nationals. WFP is committed to maintain and enhance the capacity of its national staff through in-house and external training opportunities.

Close to 40 percent of WFP staff was based in the field, working in one of six WFP sub-offices throughout the country.

Overall, 43 percent of WFP staff was female. Many women working for WFP are in leading positions such as Head of Sub-Offices, Section and Unit Heads, and the WFP Representative.

WFP strives for gender balance for national staff, among whom there are only 39 percent women, and has increased efforts to attract qualified women to open positions.

Throughout the year, WFP was grateful for the help of volunteers and professionals who contributed their work for free or were funded by partners such as the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) programme.

Staff Perspectives

Hafiza Khan joined WFP in 2000 and has since worked as a Field Monitor, Programme Assistant, and now serves as the Head of Sub-Office and Area Security Coordinator in Khulna.

What motivates you to work for WFP?
Working for WFP gives me the great opportunity to serve the poor in my country as well as my family. I am proud to help assist the poorest and most food-insecure communities in emergencies and through development programmes, and to work in close cooperation with the Government, local and international NGOs, and UN partners.

What has been your most rewarding experience at work? After Cyclone Sidr struck Bangladesh in 2007, WFP was on the frontline. We were the first organization to reach people in need. I am also always happy to show the results of our work to high-level missions. Among others, I have accompanied officials from the Government of Bangladesh, two US Ambassadors to the UN, and government ministers from Germany, the United States of America and Denmark. I know it is important to show them the results of our work – it would not be possible without their funding and support.
Donors and Funding

Directed Donor Contributions to the Country Programme in Bangladesh (CP200243) in 2012
Total Directed Contributions: US$74,744,492*
*Includes a total of US$22,456,000 in contributions to CP200243 received in 2008, 2010 and 2011.

Total Multilateral Contributions: US$11,414,971
Total Carryover from CP104100.0: US$14,024,740

Directed Donor Contributions to the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation Assisting Refugees from Myanmar (PRRO200142) in 2012
Total Directed Contributions: US$2,823,431
Total Multilateral Contributions: US$300,000

Thank you to all our donors on behalf of the 1.9 million children, women and men assisted in 2012!