Bangladesh and FAO
Partnering for sustainable agriculture and improved food security

In the immediate post-independence period, FAO was one of the first international agencies to extend a considerable amount of assistance to Bangladesh in support of relief and rehabilitation, as well as national economic recovery and reconstruction efforts. FAO’s technical assistance in the country covers sustainable agriculture (including crops, livestock and fisheries), natural resources management, forestry, food security and rural development.

Matching FAO’s expertise to Bangladesh’s development priorities
FAO’s assistance in Bangladesh is shaped by the Country Programming Framework (CPF) 2014-2018, which is centred on four priority areas:

■ Reduce poverty and enhance food security and nutrition by building the Government’s capacity to design and implement policies, promoting decent rural on- and off-farm employment, and improving nutritional awareness and women’s participation in agriculture

■ Enhance agricultural productivity through diversification/intensification, sustainable management of natural resources, use of quality inputs and mechanization

■ Improve market linkages, value addition, and quality and safety of the food system

■ Further improve technology generation and adaptation through better producer extension-research linkages

Jointly developed with the Government in close collaboration with key Ministries (Finance, Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock, Environment and Forests, Food, among others), civil society, private sectors and farmers’ groups, the CPF is also aligned with FAO’s Strategic Objectives and regional priorities as well as national priorities.

Achieving food and nutrition security in remote areas
Rural men and women in remote areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts are now more positive about their futures and their ability to resist future shocks to their agriculture-based livelihoods.

Integrated household farming
An FAO project running from February 2013 to June 2014 successfully promoted an integrated household farming approach, based on quality seed production, improved upland farming practices, fruit and vegetable production, poultry keeping and nutritional awareness. With support from the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), FAO has worked with 6,200 men and women in the region to help reduce food insecurity, restore their livelihoods and strengthen their resilience to future shocks and stresses.

FAO partnered with ECHO and the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA) to implement sustainable agricultural practices in the interest of better food and nutrition security. The project provided critical agricultural inputs such as crops, horticultural equipment and poultry. These inputs provided an opportunity to enhance agricultural production, diversification, sustainability and nutritional awareness for rural men and women. Women were the main beneficiaries of the horticulture and poultry interventions, considering the existing gender dynamics and the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in the households of the CHT area. Two hundred lead farmers were also trained to become community seed providers, in an effort to resolve the severe lack of quality seed in the region.

The combined efforts of distribution and training increased incomes and resilience in the communities, and also provided nutritional benefits through the increased availability and consumption of a wider range of nutrient-rich foods. The project also promoted resource conservation in locations that suffer from natural resource degradation.

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Supporting the fight against avian influenza

Bangladesh is one of the five high-risk endemic countries for H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza, and the growth of the poultry industry has been significantly impacted by the disease. Since March 2007, 555 outbreaks have been reported in the country’s poultry sector.

Since 2006, FAO has been providing substantial technical assistance through its ECTAD country team. In addition to its technical expertise in animal health, FAO brings additional expertise in the areas of emergency relief and rehabilitation, including disaster risk management, animal production, livestock, policy and livelihoods. From 2012 to 2013, FAO collected close to 5,000 samples from birds to identify transmission dynamics, while maintaining the cleaning, disinfection and regular surveillance of 25 major live bird markets in the country. FAO trained a total of 85 Upazila livestock officers, veterinary surgeons and Department of Livestock Services (DLS) staff in use of the online Livestock Disease Information System for animal disease surveillance and reporting of disease events to veterinary authorities.

In 2013-2014, efforts continued with an additional US$1.7 million contribution from the United States of America. FAO will continue to play a key role in supporting the laboratory network for early detection of emerging and re-emerging disease pathogens and in enhancing information sharing in collaboration with national veterinary laboratories.

Future knowledge transfer with REDD+

As part of its long-term strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Government of Bangladesh has taken initial steps to prepare for the implementation of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) activities. It established the National REDD+ Steering Committee (RSC) in July 2011 and has prepared the REDD+ Readiness Roadmap — endorsed by the RSC in December 2012. Subsequently, in June 2013 the UN-REDD Programme invited Bangladesh to submit a REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP).

FAO and the Government recently signed a key project document to strengthen the national forest inventory and satellite land monitoring system in support of REDD+. The aim is to build the capacity of the Bangladesh Forest Department to monitor the state of forest resources in the country. The project is funded by a contribution of US$6.5 million from USAID.

The project is in the process of developing complete and updated information on the forest and tree resources. It is assisting the Forestry Department (FD) in setting up a specialized “National Forest Inventory Unit” and putting in place a long-term satellite monitoring system for forestry ecosystems. It will also introduce a policy-relevant, holistic and integrated approach to forestry resource assessments that addresses all domestic needs as well as international reporting requirements. Data and information on the subsector will be disseminated to both local and international users on a timely and regular basis.

Building small-scale shrimp and prawn owners’ trade capacity

The key objective of another FAO project in Bangladesh is for small-scale shrimp producers to improve compliance with international Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary (SPS) measures in order to increase market access. The project will strengthen the concept of good aquaculture practices and better management practices in shrimp aquaculture, while establishing cluster management to achieve responsible and sustainable farming.

Over 1,000 small-scale shrimp and prawn farmers and their families have benefited since the inception of the project in 2012. Small-scale shrimp and prawn farmers were organized into registered clusters, totalling 40 farm/farmer clusters (20 shrimp and 20 prawn). In 2014, the production of shrimp rose by 48 percent owing to the introduction of the cluster system, better management and monitoring.