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**Report on Activities of FAO TCP Regional Project on Food
Security and Nutrition**

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FAO TCP Regional Project on Food Security and Nutrition

FAO monitors the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) hunger indicator 1.9 (prevalence of undernourishment-PoU) and World Food Summit (WFS) hunger target (number of undernourished population) using country data. Four main basic parameters are used for assessing undernourishment: the dietary energy supply (DES) for human consumption, the minimum dietary energy requirement (MDER); the inequality of food access as measured by the coefficient of variation (CV) of dietary energy consumption due to income and the Coefficient of Skewness (CS). The inputs for estimating these four parameters are based on country data.

For this purpose, FAO provides technical assistance to countries for improving the estimation of DES using country's quality, consistent and timely agricultural and food data, which are used to prepare the Supply and Utilization Accounts (SUAs) for compiling the country's annual Food Balance Sheets (FBS). FAO also promotes collecting and utilizing food consumption data in physical quantities from national household surveys (NHS) to derive the CV of dietary energy consumption (DEC) due to income and the CS. The NHS data also provide essential information to assess and monitor the prevalence of undernourishment indicator at national and sub national levels for answering questions of **'where'** and **'who'** are the undernourished population groups for better targeting food policies and resource allocation linked to the hunger reduction programmes.

National institutions of most countries are actively involved in collecting a wide range of agricultural and food data for the assessment and monitoring food security and nutrition status. However, each national institution produces conflicting food security and nutrition statistics as they are using different concepts and methodologies relating to their own specific objectives and needs. The collection and analysis of these data have to be harmonized according to international standards for better inter- and intra-level comparison at the national, regional and global levels.

FAO build capacity of nationals of the participating countries through its technical support to food security and nutrition analysis. This project establishes and reinforces international standard practice, and provides analytical tools and guidance to produce quality and timely food security and nutrition statistics (FSNS).

Project Background

The latest figures of undernourished people (FAO-SOFI 2013) shows that the Region of Asia and Pacific (RAP) has registered significant progress in reducing hunger during the past two decades. Prevalence of undernourishment (PoU) in RAP fell by about 44 percent while the number of undernourished population fell by 26.5 percent. Some sub-regions and countries have already achieved the MDG hunger indicator 1.9, i.e. reducing the PoU by half by 2015. A large number of countries are off the track to achieve the 2015 hunger reduction targets and have to urgently develop evidenced-based strategies to reduce the undernourished populations.

This project is built up on the successful 2011/12 TCP of Thailand which supported Thailand national statistical institutions to understand and improve their agricultural and food data for the assessment and monitoring of food security and nutrition status including MDG and WFS hunger goals. Thailand is one of the rare countries in the region compiling its annual FBS and reporting on progress towards achievement of the MDG and WFS targets. Thailand has achieved both targets.

The project targets Bangladesh, Nepal, Lao PDR and Philippines, which all have expressed interest and formalized their requests to receive technical support from FAO for improving food security and nutrition data analysis and collection. Other countries Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kiribati, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Vietnam have also expressed to have this project. Bangladesh and Nepal suffers from high rate of prevalence of undernourishment of 16.3 percent and 17.2 percent, respectively among the countries of the Southern Asia region, besides India and Pakistan which have to be supported individually within a national TCP due to the complexities of the country in terms of data collection within their different states. In the South-Eastern Asia sub-region, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Philippines are the only three countries with double digits rates of prevalence of undernourishment of respectively 15.4 percent, 26.7 percent and 16.2 percent in 2013-2013 (SOFI 2013). In total, about 55 million people are undernourished in these six countries. On the other hand, there are still a lot of rooms to improve the quality of data collected in each country, and promote the institutional capacity and skills of data analysis in order to ensure the accuracy of food security and nutrition statistics which are the basis of policy decision making.

Project Objectives

The project aims at enhancing the accuracy of food security and nutrition information and the analytical skills of nationals of the four participating countries for sound policy decision making towards promoting food security and hunger reduction.

The main objective of this project is to strengthen the statistical capacity of the national statistical systems to produce timely and consistent food and agricultural statistics useful to improve accuracy and quality of food security and nutrition information, including the prevalence of undernourishment indicator (MDG hunger indicator 1.9) useful for the assessment and monitoring its progress toward achieving national policy objectives as well as international commitments and goals.

The activities of the project aim at:

- *Improving the co-ordination and establishing linkages between all national institutions involved in the collection, processing and analysis of food and agriculture data;*
- *Improving the statistical collection and analytical capacity of the national statistical systems for the implementation of harmonized methodologies to generate better and more information on food and nutrition security using national food and agricultural data;*
- *Supporting the national food security multisectoral taskforce for advocating food security and nutrition information for the policy processes in decision-making.*

Expected Outputs

The project has set up appropriate institutional arrangements as to improve the working relations of all national institutions producing food and agriculture data and will produce the following outputs:

- 1). *Country regular yearly harmonized Food Balance Sheet (FBS);*
- 2). *Consistent and reliable food security, nutrition and sex-disaggregated statistics including the hunger indicator (prevalence of undernourishment-MDG 1.9) for reporting progress on MDG and WFS targets at national level.*
- 3). *National statistical office flagship technical “Food Security and Nutritional Status” report.*

Project Activities in Countries and in Region

The activities of the project are centred on the following two components:

- The FBS component implies the identification of agricultural and food data sources at national level for preparing the food Supply and Utilization Accounts (SUA) and compiling the yearly national FBS.
- The food consumption survey component involves the food security analysis of the most recent National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) for the estimation of food security and nutrition indicators at national and sub-national levels.

Those above two components are closely linked and the related food security analysis provide useful inputs for the assessment and monitoring of the food security and nutritional status of the country’s population at national and sub national levels for more focused policies and programmes.

Institutional Framework and Coordination

The project sets up appropriate institutional arrangements as to improve the working relations of all national institutions producing food and agriculture data and build statistical capacity of nationals in producing the yearly Food Balance Sheet and deriving food security and nutrition information for the monitoring of the MDG and WFS hunger targets as to produce the expected outputs. It will be integrated with countries’ existing food security and nutrition monitoring systems.

The project is implemented by FAORAP in collaboration with FAO country office. FAO Statistics Division (ESS) is the Lead Technical Unit (LTU) and FAORAP Statistician is the Lead Technical Officer (LTO).

Each participating country has nominated a National Project Coordinator (NPC) who serves as the national focal point of the project and is responsible for the overall management and coordination of all government inputs, and for implementation of all activities in country and at regional level.

In summary, statistical capacity building is related to

- Preparing the SUA for compiling yearly FBS using FAO harmonized methodological framework;
- Deriving FSNI using the standardized ADePT food security module
- Analysis and interpreting FSNI;
- Writing country technical report and brief on food security and nutrition indicators; and

- Dissemination results.

About 10 to 15 participants are expected to be trained at country level on each of these above listed components, which will ensure sustainability for any staff mobility in the future.

National Government Inputs

The National government has appointed the two respective focal points from MoA and NSO who coordinate the respective project activities of the FBS and FSN. In addition, the National government is committed to facilitate the communication between the two main focal national institutions, MoA and NSO and related institutions for accessing the following agricultural and food data essential for estimating the food security and nutrition indicators:

- 1) HIES food consumption, household and households' members data;
- 2) Food production data including crop, fisheries and livestock;
- 3) Food traded (from imports and exports) & other food data;
- 4) Food price at national and sub national levels; and
- 5) Anthropometric and demographic data

The project puts emphasis on better using the available agricultural and food data using appropriate analytical standardized tools. This process will identify any data and processing gaps and challenges which needs to be solved through improved data collection and inputs from research institutions.

Country's inception meeting to set up the multi-sectoral task force and identify the responsible national institutions have been completed. In addition, two multi-sectoral working taskforce have been set up to work on each component of the project, namely the FBS and FSNI and a detailed work plan of the related activities discussed. This meeting is also an occasion to interact with food security and nutrition national and international stakeholders and evaluate the importance of the project outputs for improved food policies and programmes.