

Chapter-37

Ministry of Food

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The ministry of food has been working to ensure the availability of safe and nutritious food for all in order to protect public health including ensuring food security. This is a formidable challenge considering the fact that the country has large population, poverty, malnutrition and limited resources. Significant parts of the population are poor and low income group and half of them are women. Considering this population and in order to make food available for them, food grains (rice and wheat) through women friendly Open Market Sale (OMS) program and food-friendly at fair price program are going on. By considering Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Election manifesto, 7th five year plan fortified rice and OMS distribution program are extended for low income people mainly women friendly readymade garments worker, industry labor, 4th class employees and pregnant and lactating women. Apart from this, various activities have been adopted in order to make fresh and safe food available, supply of fortified rice for the improvement of nutritious value, build public awareness programs, household silo distribution program, and steps for innovative environment friendly food stock and distribution system by which poor women and children are being benefitted along with the poor people.

1.2 Constitutional and Policy obligation of the Ministry: Ministry of Food is responsible to ensure sustainable food security for all the people of Bangladesh as stated in the Article 15(A) of the Constitution of Bangladesh. Under the dynamic leadership of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Ministry of Food endeavors to achieve the goals and targets of Vision 2021, 7th Five Year Plan and the SDGs. The Ministry implements National Food Policy, its Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan (CIP) towards a non-distorting Public Food Distribution System (PFDS) to maintain stable food grain prices and promote access to safe and nutritious food for the vulnerable population.

2.0 Major Functions of the Ministry

- ❖ Considering the possible adverse effect of environment and climate change, formulation, implementation of policy strategy in the country's overall food management and strengthening of food security system;
- ❖ Import-export of food grain and procurement (rice and wheat), storage, distribution and movement of food grain;

- ❖ Determining the public procurement and sale price, ensuring price stability and sufficient supply of food grains;
- ❖ Formulating and implementing various development projects of food sector;
- ❖ Maintaining sufficient stock, preservation, testing the quality and maintenance of food grains;
- ❖ Food planning, research and monitoring;
- ❖ Implementation of all programs undertaken under the Safe Food Act 2013;
- ❖ Making Contract and communicate with regional and international organizations relating to food management.

3.0 Impact of Strategic Objectives of the Ministry on Women's Advancement

3.1 Strengthening institutional capacity of Food management through food policy and strategy: The Food-friendly Policy was formulated in 2016 and it has been amended in 2017 by giving priority to the extreme poor, widow and divorced and disabled. Moreover newly forming Food and Nutrition Policy and Nutrition sensitive Country Investment plan 2 (2016-2020) and some researches women and children are specially focused.

3.2 Ensure price incentive to farmers and food security through sufficient stock: Due to the adequate food stocks at the government level, the risk of food crisis will be reduced during disaster. This will bring stability to the supply situation and acts as a food safety net for the poor especially for the destitute women. Generally, at the beginning of the financial year a stock of 10 lakh metric ton food grains is preserved in government storage/silo, sufficient to meet the next 5 month's requirement. The stock of food grains usually diminishes just before the harvesting season and reaches the maximum at the end of the procurement season. During a crisis it will be possible to stabilize market prices of food grains through Open Market Sale (OMS) of stored food grains. As a result, it would be possible for poor women to buy food grains at lower price. Through the OMS, Fair Price and Targeted food grains Distribution Programs, food are provided to low-income people at affordable prices. Maintaining safety stocks of food grains at the government level will thus increase food supply to the poor and destitute women during crisis period. Due to the purchase of crops by determining the minimum value of the crop at the local level, the fair value of the crops of the marginal and the poor farmers will be ensured. The poor women get the opportunity to sell food directly at pre-determined price by the government in the harvesting period which eliminates the exploitation of the brokers and middlemen.

- 3.3 Ensure availability of safe food and improvement of nutrition:** Providing fortified food enriched with micronutrients through government food aid programmes to the destitute people, especially to the poor women, improves their nutritional level. In addition, food aided programmes also create employment opportunities to the women.
- 3.4 Ensure availability of food to the poor and ultra-poor:** Employment opportunities for the rural poor are created during lean periods through the implementation of Test Relief (TR), Food for Work (FFW), Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programmes. Direct supplies of food grains on requisition of implementing authorities under the food based programme will ease access to food for the beneficiaries. For this, necessary stocks, storage and distribution channels are maintained. As a result of distribution of food grains to different women friendly programs, employment for the poor and destitute women will be created; their income will increase and that will ease their access to food.
- 3.5 Increase the capacity of food storage:** Increase space capacity of Food Godown is directly contributing in Social security programs like Food friendly program and OMS. Half of the beneficiaries of these programs are women. If food, health and nutrition security of our women is secured then they will contribute to our economic development through their employment.
- 3.6 Ensure price stability of food grains (rice and wheat):** In order to stabilize food grain price in the market, food grains are procured from farmers at fair prices during harvesting season which is subsequently sold at OMS during the lean period. This brings price stability in the market and poor-friendly market system is ensured. As a result, it would be easier for the poor women to get enough food.
- 4.0 Role of the Ministry of Food in establishing women's advancement and rights:**
- 4.1** Since women constitute half of the population, they may be considered as significant beneficiaries of food security programs. The incidence of food insecurity falls disproportionately on the deprived section of the population, a larger portion of them are women. Some of them are widows; some others are deserted by husbands. Despite being deserted or window, many of them have more than one child. As a result, food shortage impacts them most. Considering the above Ministry of food has formulated. 'The National Food Policy Plan of Action'. If this plan of action is fully implemented, this would contribute greatly to ensure the food security for the destitute women. Laws, rules and regulations have been framed for maintaining the quality of food, including ensuring un-adulterated and safe foods, and their implementation are going on, which will help in the life and health of women.

- 4.2 To develop a food security system, Bangladesh Country Investment Plan 2011 has been formulated in the light of the National Food Policy Plan of Action. In this plan an integrated food safety net has been targeted in conformity with the 7th Five Year Plan. To ensure food security, Under Food Safety Act 2013, the safe food rules 2014 regarding administrative procedure for seizing of unsafe/adulterated food has already been formulated. Consequently Bangladesh Safe Food Authority has been established. It is expected that with these planning documents and strengthening of the legal foundation, the Ministry of Food will be able to ensure food security for all. Women being the half of the total population would also be able to enjoy that benefit of this security. Moreover, special emphasis has been accorded to ensure food security to the poor and destitute women in the light of the Food Policy Action Plan, Bangladesh Country Investment Plan 2011 etc.
- 4.3 Ministry of Food procures food grains from the farmer at a fair and reasonable price during the harvesting season and distributes grain directly or indirectly through different target-oriented programs to stabilize the market price. One of such distribution programmes is OMS. This is a women-friendly program through which food grains are sold to the poor at a nominal price. A large proportion of this poor population is women. As a result, by implementing the OMS programme, the Ministry of Food is ensuring food availability to the women in low- income group. On the other hand Ministry of Food indirectly supports other government programmes like the implementation of TR, FFW, VGF and VGD programs by supplying food grains. Most of the poor beneficiaries of these programmes are women.

Distributed amount of food-grains under OMS and food-friendly program

Sectors	Fiscal Year	Distributed Amount (MT)	No. of total beneficiaries (In Lakh)	Percentage of beneficiaries	
				Women	Men
OMS (including 4 th class)	2017-18	3,52,879	58.81	52	48
	2018-19 (upto 07/03/2019)	1,91,224	31.87	52	48
Food-friendly	2017-18	2,98,492	49.70	55	45
	2018-19 (upto 07/03/2019)	4,51,001	49.70	55	45

- 4.4 Government is constructing storages, silos and warehouses for the storage of food. In these construction projects a substantial number of workers are women, allowing them opportunities for part time employment. Women constitute about 25 percent of the construction workers. As such a portion of the money allotted for development projects is being utilized for overall welfare of the women.
- 4.5 A new Program has been under implementation Named Food and Nutrition Security program for Bangladesh by financial aid of European Union and others Development

partners (DFID and USAID). SUCHANA Component of this program has been working for nutritional development of lactating and pregnant women and children and adolescent girls of Sylhet and Moulavibazar Districts. Another program for nutritional development of extreme poor specially for women and children also undergoing by Call for Proposal component in Hill Tracts and Kurigram, Gibandha, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Jamalpur and Sherpur districts under direct supervision of European Union by the INGOs AND NGO.

- 4.6 The program to increase the food preservation capacity at family level has been taken in the disaster prone area of the country. Under the construction of modern food storage project, 5 lakh household silo will be distributed in 63 upazilas under 19 districts and 2,38,365 household silos were distributed already. The capacity of family silo is 70 liters in which 56 kg rice or 45 kg paddy can be stored. A significant number of beneficiaries of this program are women. In future, the distribution activities of this type of family silo will be implemented in more expanded form. As a result, the number of women beneficiaries will further be increased with through such kind of activities.

Proposed financial allocation for Women in Proposed 2019-2020 financial year budget is as follows:

Name of the project	Total allocation in this project	Allocation for women (Allocation for Family Silo distribution activities 27%)
Modern Food Godown Construction Project	700 Crore	Allocation for women in Family Silo distribution activities 19 crore×27%=5.13 crore
# In 2018-19 financial year total amount in Family Silo distribution activities component was 38 crore taka within that allocation for women was 10.26 crore taka.		

5.0 Priority Spending Areas/programmes and their impact on women's advancement

Serial No.	Priority Spending Area/ Programs	Impacts on Women's Advancement (Direct and Indirect)
1	2	3
1.	Strengthening institutional capacity of food management through food policy and strategy.	By strengthening institutional capacity of food management through food policy and strategy, food security will be secured and poverty will be eliminated and women development will be enhanced.
2.	Domestic procurement of food grains (Rice and Wheat) and incentives to farmers and establishment of food security through sufficient stock.	One of the important aspects of food security is to create adequate stock of food grains at the government level so that any disastrous situation can be tackled and market prices can be stabilized. On the other hand, collecting food grains from the farmers at incentive price benefits his family. Besides, poor and destitute women will be

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1	2	3
		benefited if the food grains are stored and food prices are in control at any critical time.
3.	Availability of safe food and improvement of nutrition.	Safe food management activities implement will ensure and development of nutritional status then health of our people will ensure. As a result our half women health will benefit those are worst victim of mal-nutrition. Government initiatives for safe food will help to ensure health security of this community. Awareness program for safe food also contribute to ensure the quality of food items.
4.	Distribution of food grains at fair prices for poor people	Targeting programs and distribution of rice and flour in the open market have been given importance so that lower income people can get food grains at affordable price. Besides, food supply to the poor families has been ensured through food-friendly programs at the union level. If the poor people, especially the poor women and children, can get food, they will be able to meet their basic human needs.
5.	Increase the capacity of food storage	Construction of 1.05 Lac MT capacity of new 162 food godowns and standard food storages, silos and other infrastructure and repair and modernization of existing food storages and other infrastructure creates job opportunities for women. In construction of modern and environment friendly new godowns and silos 5.35 lac MT capacity vertical steel silos building projects, around 25 percent of the construction workers are women. Through this project 5 lac family silo (Food grade water typed plastic bin) will be distributed. Half of the beneficiaries will be women. Apart from this, 50% women worker will work in the implementation process of this project. In the old Food Godown repair and maintenance projects, around 25 percent of the construction workers are women.
6.	Ensure price stability of food grains (rice and wheat)	If the price of food grains can be stabilized, it will have direct impact on reducing poverty. Specially, low-income populations have been exposed to serious risk if prices of food grains are not kept in tolerable levels during high inflation or supply crisis. Market prices were kept stable by procuring of food grains at the price fixed by the government in the production period and selling of food grains through open market.

Serial No.	Priority Spending Area/ Programs	Impacts on Women's Advancement (Direct and Indirect)
1	2	3
		By keeping the price of food grains stabilized, half of the population who are women will benefit directly.

6.0 Women's Share in Ministry's Total Expenditure

(Taka in Crore)

Description	Budget 2019-20			Revised 2018-19			Budget 2018-19			Actual 2017-18		
	Budget	Women Share		Revised	Women Share		Budget	Women Share		Actual	Women Share	
		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent
Total Budget	523190	161247	30.82	442541	136036	30.74	464573	136938	29.48	321861	88441	27.48
Ministry Budget	4814	162	3.36	4316	148	3.43	7304	3049	41.74	13058	2296	17.58
Development	889	70	7.87	645	55	8.53	765	66	8.62	298	29	9.89
Operating	3925	92	2.34	3671	93	2.53	6539	2984	45.63	12761	2266	17.76

Source: RCGP database

7.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

- 7.1 In order to keep food market price stable, the government, on the one hand, procures food grains directly from the farmers at incentive price during the yielding season, on the other hand, distribute food grains in different target oriented programs when market price tends to rise. One such distribution program is OMS or open market sale program. By this program food grains are sold at low price among the poor people. And a large part of this poor people is women. As a result, the ministry of food ensures providing food to low-income women through this program. It is a women-friendly program which ensures good health of poor women and children by providing quality safe and micronutrient food grains.
- 7.2 In addition, a program of 30 kg rice per month at Tk. 10/kg for 5 million households started in the fiscal year 2016-17. In this program, widows/divorced/ husband abandoned/poor elderly women dominant families have been given priority at village level. Under this program, 2.98 lakh MT rice was distributed in 2017-18 and 4.51 lakh MT rice distributed up to 07/03/2019 in the fiscal year 2018-2019.. Most of the beneficiaries of this program are women.
- 7.3 A new Program has been under implementation Named Food and Nutrition Security program for Bangladesh by financial aid of European Union and others Development partners (DFID and USAID). SUCHANA Component of this program has been working for nutritional development of lactating and pregnant women and children and adolescent girls of Sylhet and Moulavibazar Districts. Another program for nutritional development of extreme poor specially for women and children also undergoing by Call for Proposal component in Hill Tracts and Kurigram, Gibandha, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Jamalpur and Sherpur districts under direct supervision of European Union by the INGOs AND NGO.

- 7.4 Household Silo program to increase the food preservation capacity at family level has been taken in the disaster prone area of the country. Under the construction of modern food storage project, 5 lakh household silos will be distributed in 63 upazilas under 19 districts and 2,38,365 household silos were distributed already.
- 7.5 Story about role of Food-Friendly Distribution Program (Khado-Bhandhob Karmoshuchi)

“Roshni Begumer Hasi”

One simple action has changed whole life of a widow named Roshni Begum of Chanpara village of Subgram Union of Sadar upazila of Boghura District in 2016. She did Katha Stitching as a source of income for her family. It is very hard to lead her family with this little income. She could not afford her children’s food and education. She felt very helpless.

At that time, Union Parishad member Latif Mia told her that our Honorable Prime Minister Has introduced khaddo Bhandhob Karmoshuchi by 30 Kg Rice at 10 taka kg will be distributed for 5 months (March, April, September, October, November) in a year for poor people like her. Roshni Begum was included into the list of beneficiary of FFD program. Now Roshni begum can give food for her children. Life of the Roshni begum has been changed a little. She can save some money for her children’s education and health.

8.0 Recommendation for Future Activities:

- ❖ Taking awareness programs relating to safe food and nutrition for women;
- ❖ Strengthening the public Food Distribution system keeping in view the demand and requirements of the destitute women;
- ❖ Ensuring participation of women in the planning , supervision and distribution activities of food security;
- ❖ Evaluate and recognize the work, role, and contribution of women in maintaining food security;
- ❖ Make social safety net programs more women-friendly and formulate strategy for the protection of women;
- ❖ Identify poor and destitute women and engage local women representatives in government food distribution activities ;
- ❖ Open Market Sale (OMS) and Fair Price Card program have to be expanded and be more women-focused;
- ❖ Establish Day care centers in Food Directorate, sub ordinate offices and other field offices;

- ❖ Allocate one Crore Taka budget based on specific monitoring and evaluation to get the benefits of money allocated for food security and nutrition for women related projects taken for the socio-economic development of women;
- ❖ For implementation of SDG-2 (Zero Hunger) a Project for the Pregnant and Lactating mothers in some extreme poor upazilas will be taken soon for meeting food security and nutrition challenges for 1000 days.