

## 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 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 OMS program and food-friendly at fair price program are going on. Apart from this, various activities have been adopted in order to make fresh and safe food available and to supply of fortified rice for the improvement of nutritious value including to build public awareness programs. As a result, poor women and children are being benefitted along with the poor people.

#### 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 the 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 **To ensure food security:** The supply of adequate food during disasters is ensured by government's strategy of keeping adequate stocks of food at district and Upazila levels, through domestic and international procurement. 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 tons of food grains is preserved in government storage/silo, sufficient to meet the next 5 months' 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 low prices and the process will have a positive impact on poverty reduction. Maintaining of safety stocks of food grains at the government level will thus increase food supply to poor and destitute women during periods of crisis.

- 3.2 **To stabilize market prices of food grains and to ensure fair prices to farmers:** In order to stabilize food grain price in the market the Directorate of Food procures food grains from farmers at fair prices during harvesting season which is subsequently sold at OMS during the lean period. This brings price stability to the market and poor-friendly market system is ensured. As a result, poor women will have better access to food and nutrition. Purchasing food grains at government's pre-determined prices will ensure fair prices to marginal and poor farmers. With the procurement of food grains at fair prices and subsequently distributing through OMS, grain prices in the market will remain stable and destitute women will get the opportunity to buy food grains at a relatively low price. This will help poor women gain access to food and nutrition and increase their food security and involvement in income generating activities. They will also benefit from the government procurement of food grains at a pre-determined price which eliminates the costs of brokers and middlemen.
- 3.3 **To ensure ease access to food for the poor especially poor women and children:** 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, the employment for the poor and destitute women will be created; their income will increase and that will ease their access to food.
- 3.4 **To ensure safe food and to improve nutrition status:** 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.

#### **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 widow, 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 unadulterated and safe foods, and implementation activities are ongoing, which will help in the life and health of women.
- 4.2 To develop a food security system the 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 Open Market Sale (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 <sup>th</sup> class)	2016-17	3,66,962	61.16	52	48
	2017-18 (Upto 25/04/2018)	2,92,016	58.40	52	48
Food-friendly	2016-17	6,84,752	49.51	55	45
	2017-18 (Upto 25/04/2018)	2,93,483	49.61	55	45

- 4.4 The 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 The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is implementing the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme under which poor and destitute women are provided various trainings and food support. Ministry of Food has been engaged in fortifying a portion of rice that is distributed under VGD programme. In this fortification process, fortified kernels enriched with irons, vitamins and minerals are blended with regular rice. This rice helps to reduce the nutritional deficiencies among the poverty stricken women and children.
- 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. 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 o activities.

## 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.	Domestic procurement of food grains (Rice and Wheat)	❖ 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 benefited if the food grains are stored and food prices are in control at any critical time.
2.	Import of food grain through own resources and aid supported imports.	❖ It will bring stability to the supply situation and acts as a food safety net for the poor especially during any disaster or crisis situation ❖ Maintaining safe stocks of food grains through import helps to continue the OMS and Fair Price programme where poor and destitute women are direct beneficiaries
3.	In order to increase storage capacity of food grains, construction of new and standard food storages, silos and other infrastructure and repair and modernization of existing food storages and other infrastructure.	❖ It creates job opportunities for women as around 25 per cent of the construction workers are women. Through this a portion of the development expenditure is going to women as income. This helps the empowerment of poor women
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 low and 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.	Taking awareness program on safe food and ensuring quality food	❖ Citizen's health and quality of life will improve with the availability of safe and micronutrient enriched food. This will help the women, who are half of the total population. As women and children are more prone to malnutrition, government's initiatives like this will be crucial to improve their health situation.

## 6.0 Women's Share in Ministry's Total Expenditure

(Taka in Crore)

Description	Budget 2018-19			Revised 2017-18			Budget 2017-18		
	Budget	Women Share		Revised	Women Share		Budget	Women Share	
		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent
Total Budget	464574	136938	29.48	371495	86169	23.2	400266	112019	27.99
Ministry Budget	16025	3050	19.03	14342	2330	16.25	14402	6455	44.82
Development	765	66	8.6	316	29	9.15	423	87	20.57
Non-Development	15261	2984	19.55	14026	2301	16.41	13979	6368	45.55

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, whereas on the other hand, when the food market price is rising, efforts are made to distribute food grains in different target oriented programs and keep the market stable. One such distribution program is OMS or open market sale program. Through which 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; this 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, in the last fiscal year (2016-2017), in the food-friendly program rice sale started at the rate of 10 taka/kg in amount of 30 kg per month among 5 million households at the union level of the country. In this program, widows/divorced/husband abandoned/poor elderly feminine families have been given priority at union level. Under this program, 2.93 lakh MT rice was distributed (25/04/018) in 2 months (March and April) during dearth of work in the current fiscal year (2017-2018). Most of the beneficiaries of this program are women.

## 8.0 Recommendations 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 in the activities of food security;
- ❖ Evaluate and recognize the work, role, and contribution of women in maintaining food security;
- ❖ Make social safety net programs more woman-friendly and formulate strategy for the protection of women;

- ❖ Identify poor and destitute women and engage women elected representatives in government food distribution;
- ❖ Open Market Sale (OMS) and Fair Price Card program have to be expanded and be more women-focused.
- ❖ Refine the budget based on specific monitoring and evaluation to get the benefits of money allocated for food security related projects taken for the socio-economic development of women.