



Malnutrition, food insecurity on rise

Says new study

Over sixty percent of Bangladeshi households suffered from food insecurity last year, a situation exacerbated by sharp increases in food prices which outstripped the growth in daily labour rates, a major new study has found.

The report by the EU-funded National Food Security Nutritional Surveillance Project (FSNSP) also found that at least 10 million children lived in food insecure households, over a third of whom were exposed to situations in 2010 in which extreme coping behaviours like skipping meals were employed.

Titled 'State of Nutrition and Food Security in Bangladesh: 2010' the report is a joint effort between BRAC University, Helen Keller International and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Despite clear improvements in maternal and child mortality, the country is lagging behind in addressing maternal and child under-nutrition, the study found.

According to the FSNSP report, the prevalence of stunting (low height for age) is extremely high at 45 percent, impacting over 7 million children under the age of five.

Speaking as the chief guest at the formal launching of the report at a local hotel on Tuesday, Dr. Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, Minister for Food and Disaster Management said that despite immense gains in food production in the 40 years since independence, lack of awareness is driving food insecurity and malnutrition.

Leading physicians and nutrition experts expressed concern at the findings, stressing that malnutrition must be tackled if the country is to reach the MDG 1 goal of reducing child hunger by one-half.

Increased action is urgently required, especially scaling up existing interventions that target the most vulnerable, they said.

Dr. Khurshid Talukder, Consultant Pediatrician and Research Coordinator Centre for Woman and Child Health (CWCH), said: "Surveillance can be considered successful only if the data is used to drive action. We need to act to reduce malnutrition in all its forms. This includes not only food but also action against diseases like diarrhoea." — UNB