

Malnutrition easing up

Study reveals decline in number of women suffering from severe malnutrition
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SURVEY FINDINGS

Cases of severe malnutrition among women halved

24pc women earn

96pc households with sanitation facilities

Stunting among

Only two in every hundred women in Bangladesh suffered from severe malnutrition in 2013, down from four a year ago, reveals a survey.

The improvement in nutrition situation is largely due to a change in women's dietary habits, says the study titled "State of Food Security and Nutrition in Bangladesh: 2013" released by Food Security Nutritional Surveillance Project (FSNSP).

"The situation improved as they ate more protein foods," said Zeba Mahmud, director of James P Grant School of Public Health at Brac University which jointly conducted the European Union-funded project with Helen Keller International (HKI) and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

The food habit of women has been changing over the years, Zeba said. "I hope the growth trend will remain stable in future."

The number of stunting cases among children below five years of age also came down to 35 percent from 45 percent in 2010, states the report released at a press conference at Brac Centre Inn in the capital yesterday.

Businesses and jobs were the principle sources of income for almost 40 percent of households nationally but the prevalence of salaried income was generally much lower

in the food insecure agro-ecological zones like coastal belt, eastern hills, haor, padma chars and northern chars, the study finds.

Twenty-four percent women aged between 14-49 years were earning in 2013 and one-fifth of the households studied received remittance. The people of Chittagong, Sylhet and Dhaka divisions received higher remittances than those of Rajshahi and Rangpur, it said.

"It is encouraging that some indicators of food security are improving ... We can use the report to make new plans to make Bangladesh free from poverty," said State Minister for Finance MA Mannan.

Ninety-six percent households across the country had sanitation facilities in 2013, the report adds.

A total of 22,896 households in 954 communities across the country were surveyed under the project. Of the samples, 19,013 women aged between 19-49 years and 4,263 girls between 10-18 years were interviewed.

Additionally, 12,000 children's weights were measured and 9,984 caregivers were interviewed.

Of the respondents, 59 percent women consumed inadequately diverse diets. The situation is worst in Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur, the survey said.

In 2013, too many girls had children too early and over half of the pregnancies occurred among adolescent girls aged 18 or younger.

The overall pattern of child feeding practices was similar between 2012 and 2013. Unfortunately, the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding among children in their first month of life decreased to 74 percent in 2013, from 84 percent a year back, the survey mentioned.