
LIFE IN A TIME OF FOOD PRICE VOLATILITY: BANGLADESH COUNTRY REPORT 2013

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This report presents findings on the ways in which food price volatility (FPV) affects poor people's lives and how they cope with its effects in Bangladesh. It explains how different occupational groups are differently affected due to changes in contexts and opportunities at micro (household), meso (community) and macro (national) levels. The four key issues studied in the research are: a) well-being trends, i.e. people's perception about what living well means in their context, and how far or close they are to their desired state of well-being, and why; b) coping strategies, i.e. how people are managing in difficult times, with a particular focus on how they are coping with volatile and rising food prices; c) support systems, i.e. an exploration of different types of support systems available to people living in poverty that help them to survive; and d) perspectives on farming as a future prospect for young people, i.e. how price volatility is affecting the occupational choice of people who traditionally rely on agriculture.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility is a four-year collective research effort that attempts to explore the effects of changes in food prices on the lives of the marginal poor. Since 2007, the food, fuel and financial crises throughout the world have caused enormous suffering to marginal people living in poverty who are unable to maintain decent living standards. While media reports provided enough evidence of such suffering, few systematic longitudinal studies have been conducted to help understand the intricacies of how people experience difficulties in maintaining their lifestyles and cope in different ways in an era of food price volatility (FPV). The objective of the research is to have a clear understanding of the ways in which FPV affects poor people's lives and how they cope with its effects. More importantly, the study tries to understand how different occupational groups are differently affected due to changes in contexts and opportunities at micro (household), meso (community) and macro (national) levels.

In line with the research objectives, we have concentrated on four key issues: a) well-being trends, i.e. people's perception about what living well means in their context, and how far or close they are to their desired state of well-being, and why; b) coping strategies, i.e. how people are managing in difficult times, with a particular focus on how they are coping with volatile and rising food prices; c) support systems, i.e. an exploration of different types of support systems available to people living in poverty that help them to survive; and d) perspectives on farming as a future prospect for young people, i.e. how price volatility is affecting the occupational choice of people who traditionally rely on agriculture.

In 2013, we focused on building on our findings and getting an idea about what had changed since the research conducted in 2012. As our goal was to analyse what types of changes had taken place and the impacts of these changes, we decided to return to the same study sites. In addition, we focused on studying accountability for local food security, asking who is accountable for hunger – a theme which had been integrated into the wider research project.

In terms of political events and policy changes that may have affected food price volatility between 2012 and 2013, we identified four as being particularly important: boosting agricultural production, maintaining food grain stocks, new import arrangements, and popular protests. Results indicate that in almost all cases these have positively affected only the urban poor. The rural poor have not benefited from the changes, as a result of which they have remained extremely vulnerable to FPV.

In 2012's report we applied Maslow's need hierarchy model to explain the well-being trend among our targeted population. In 2013 we found that in the study site in Dhaka the residents were moving upward in the hierarchy ladder, whereas in the rural study sites we did not witness any improvement. In fact, in the rural study sites respondents were concerned that their well-being trend might not improve at all in the near future. We identified several likely reasons for the reported significant qualitative changes in the living standard of respondents in the urban research site: the absence of the threat of eviction, combined with better access to utility services, increases in wages and salaries and NGO interventions.

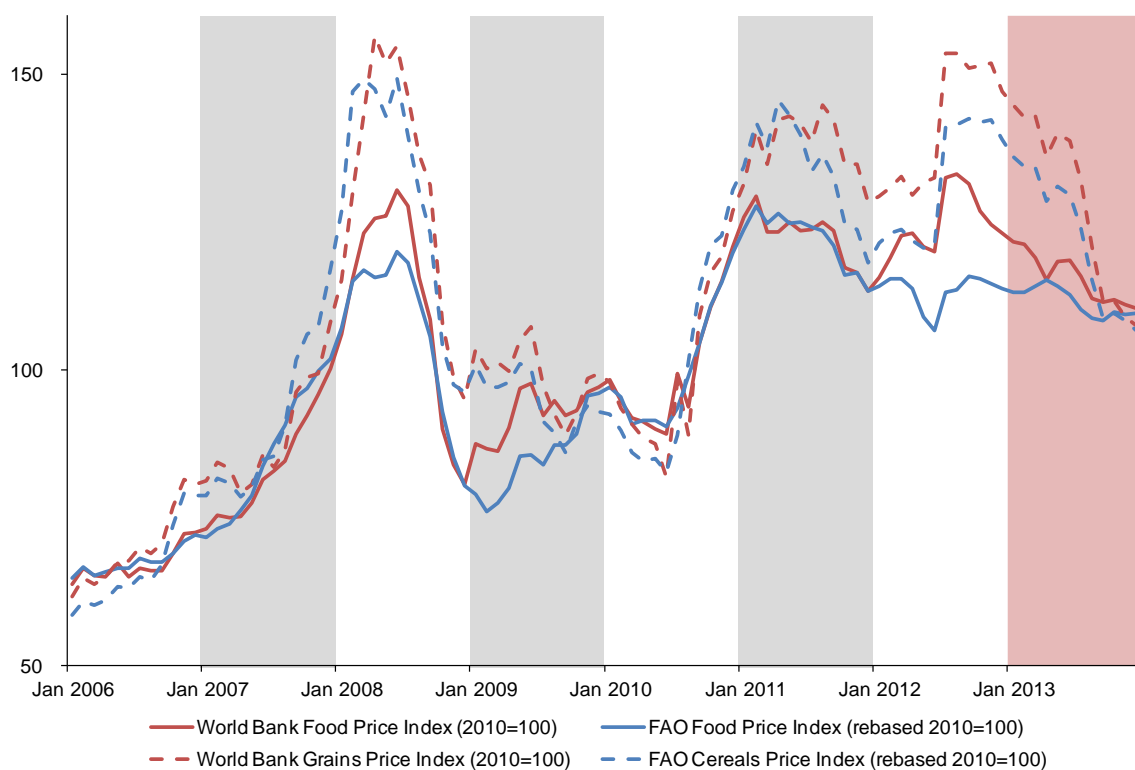
Although the prices of food and non-food items increased in both the rural and urban areas in this study, we found that people living in the urban areas were better equipped to deal with the price increases, because their incomes had increased and because there were more different foods available to choose from. In 2013, access to food markets had become a little easier for the urban dwellers, while it had either remained the same or declined for the rural residents. Only the slum dwellers of Dhaka city are succeeding in managing their livelihoods in an effective way and, in effect, they are doing quite well. In contrast, we did not observe any income increase in the other two study sites where respondents were just surviving in a difficult time of FPV.

Although it is still too early to draw any conclusions about the broader picture, it can be argued that lack of accountability and the lack of demand for accountability observed in study areas is not a good sign for a healthy democracy. If the people feel that they are not getting what they are entitled to and come to a conclusion that the government will never provide them with basic necessities, there will be no pressure on the government to respond.

1 INTRODUCTION

Global food prices have risen sharply, substantially and unpredictably since 2007 (see Figure 1), and experts believe that prices will remain volatile in the foreseeable future. People living in poverty worldwide tend to eat more than -- or nearly all of -- what they grow, and they spend a large proportion of their incomes and effort on getting food. For example, buying food accounts for three-quarters of all expenditure among the poorest 20 per cent in Kenya, Pakistan, and Zambia. This means that when prices rise, people on low incomes face increased food insecurity. This compels them to change what or how much they eat, or to earn, produce, or procure more. This is particularly the case for the fast-growing proportion of poor people living in cities. Since 2007–2008, food price spikes have been serious enough to provoke mass popular discontent across the world, and were even linked to the Arab Spring. The food price spike of 2011 alone increased the numbers of people living in poverty globally by an estimated 44 million.¹

Figure 1: World food prices since 2006



In 2012, with funding from UK Aid and Irish Aid, Oxfam, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), and national partners started a four-year project to track the impacts of food price rises and volatility. This project, *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility*, aims to track the impacts of FPV on everyday life for poor people. The rationale was that many of the social costs of managing change are invisible to policy makers. Nutritional or poverty measures may indicate that poor people have coped well and appear 'resilient', but only because such measures miss or fail to take into account some key costs of apparent resilience. These may include increases in the time and effort needed to feed and look after people; non-monetary effects on family, social, or gender relations; mental health costs, such as stress; quality of life; and cultural issues, including, for example, the pressure to eat 'foreign' food, or food considered inferior. These issues tend to be neglected in nutrition and poverty impact studies, but they tend to matter a great deal to the people affected.²

Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility is a four-year project projected to run from 2012 to 2015. The project centres on 10 urban or peri-urban and 13 rural locations across 10 low- to middle-income countries (see Figure 2). It comprises a collective of researchers tracking, documenting, and analysing how FPV affects the everyday lives of people on low or precarious incomes. It focuses on the impacts of FPV on paid work, the work of care or looking after families and others, on relationships, and on what is happening to the resources people have with which to cope. The project has three component activities, namely:

1. Food security indicator tracking aimed at generating a picture of what has been happening to food security and food prices;
2. Qualitative research, with short annual visits to groups and households. Eight sites have been visited annually since 2009, with 2012 being the fourth visit; in the remaining 15 sites, the research began in 2012;
3. Integrated qualitative and quantitative (Q2) analyses of the impacts of food price changes on well-being, drawing on nationally representative poverty data for each country.

Details of the overall project methodology are provided in the Annex.

The 10 research countries were chosen based on the following criteria:

- They have significant problems of undernourishment;
- Research teams were already in situ, as in the case of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya, and Zambia, where IDS has been undertaking crisis monitoring research since 2009;
- Oxfam offices in the research countries had asked to be involved in order to improve their understanding of the impacts of food price volatility.

The 10 countries under study have been categorised according to their per-capita income levels and the prevalence of undernourishment using FAO thresholds (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Categorisation of the research countries

	Low-income countries	Lower-middle-income countries
'Severe' undernourishment	Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya	Guatemala and Zambia
'Moderate' undernourishment	Bangladesh	Bolivia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam

2 THE BANGLADESH RESEARCH

The overall 10-country research project aims to inform efforts to improve the food security of people living in poverty in different developing countries. This research report focuses on our project research in Bangladesh, where we are studying the impacts of food price volatility on human well-being and development through qualitative research undertaken during repeated visits to the same communities. Additional research on the impact of food price rises on the food security and livelihoods of poor urban populations in Bangladesh has been conducted to inform Oxfam work on the topic.³ The research sites for the present study are in the capital city of Dhaka; in the northeastern district of Naogaon on the border with India; and in the southern district of Khulna, in a community affected by the 2009 Aila cyclone. Each year since 2009 the research teams have visited the research sites in Dhaka and Naogaon. Research began in the Khulna site in 2012. More details of the research sites are provided below.

In 2012, we concentrated mainly on the following research questions:

- How is food security in Bangladesh being affected by food price changes?
- What do people understand by the concept of well-being? How do they define it? What are the factors that affect their well-being, and how closely is food price volatility associated with the concept?
- How do people survive when food price volatility is high?
- What are their basic coping strategies? How effective are they?
- What are the support systems that are available to poor people? How well are they functioning? In particular, what type of public assistance is being provided to poor people? How effective is it? What type of NGO assistance is available? Is it effective?
- How is FPV affecting occupational patterns and aspirations, with respect to farming in particular? What are the issues associated with the future of farming?

In 2013, we focused on building on our findings and getting an idea about what had changed since the previous research visit. In addition, we focused on studying accountability for local food security, asking who is accountable for hunger – a theme which had been integrated into the wider research project. In 2013, our goals were to:

- Briefly analyse the broader political and policy context of Bangladesh to see whether any significant shift had occurred. Building on the findings of the previous year, we attempted to explore whether the government was responding to the needs of the people and whether policies regarding food prices or agricultural production had changed -- and if so, why.
- Understand whether the price of food items and other necessities had changed significantly, and understand the impacts of any changes.
- Explore and analyse whether income and job opportunities for people living in different areas of Bangladesh have changed. At the same time, we attempted to identify why changes had happened and how they were affecting people's capacity to live a decent life.
- Analyse the strength of different support systems available to people in the research sites.
- Explore what types of formal and informal accountability mechanisms are available to help people to deal with food insecurity. We have specifically tried to identify the political actors that are held accountable by the people, the process through which this accountability is ensured (or not ensured) and what people do when these accountability mechanisms do not function effectively.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for the Bangladesh research was explained in full in the 2012 report,⁴ while details of the methodology for the parent project are provided in the Annex to this report. In order to develop a better understanding of FPV in Bangladesh, we are focusing the research in three different contexts:

- First, we are exploring how food price volatility affects the lives of people living in urban slums. As poor urban dwellers are typically engaged in a number of professions, this helps us to understand the relation between occupational choices and the effects of food price volatility.
- Second, in contrast to the urban slums, we selected an agricultural-based rural area. In addition to the occupational contrast, this allows us to understand the effects of traditional societal values in helping rural people living in poverty to deal with adverse situations.
- The third research site allows us to explore the impact of an additional shock (in addition to FPV) on poor people. We were especially interested in analysing the dynamics of FPV in a disaster-affected area as this will show us how an 'add-on' shock affects the strategies of people living in extreme poverty for dealing with FPV.

Based on this we selected the following research sites:

- **Urban slum - Kalyanpur Notun Bazar Slum** was established in 1981 on land owned by the House Building Research Institute. Since its establishment, the slum has regularly been subjected to evictions (1991, 2001 and 2007) and arson (1991, 2006 and 2011). We observed the effect of these two types of incidents/shocks on the livelihoods of the poor slum dwellers in 2012, and in 2013 we wanted to explore where anything had changed.
- **Disaster-affected area - Koyra is an Upazila⁵ of Khulna district**, which is bounded by the Bay of Bengal and the Sundarbans in the south. As pointed out in the 2012 report the main occupations in this area are agriculture and agricultural labour (63 per cent), forestry, and fishing.⁶ However, following Cyclone Aila in 2009, agricultural land was severely damaged by salinity. As a result, a large number of agricultural labourers had to change their livelihoods from agriculture to forest- and river-based (e.g. fishing) occupations. The effects of Cyclone Aila were strongly felt in 2012, with several NGOs and government agencies working in the area to support the poor. In 2013 we wanted to explore whether these support systems were still in place and how these systems were helping the poor.
- **Rural area - Dhamurhat, an Upazila of Naogaon district** in the northern part of Bangladesh, is bounded by West Bengal (India) in the north, Badalgachhi and Patnitala Upazila in the south, Joypurhat Sadar Upazila in the east, and Patnitala Upazila to the west. It consists of eight unions, 212 mouzas (in Bangladesh, a **mouza** or **mauza** is a type of administrative district, corresponding to a specific land area within which there may be one or more settlements), and 250 villages. The main crops are paddy, wheat, jute, eggplant, potato, vegetables, mustard seed, pulses, onion, garlic, and tamarind. We selected Uttar (North) Jahanpur, a village of Jahanpur union, as it is a traditional agricultural rural area, situated in a corner of Dhamurhat Upazila, adjacent to the west corner of Joypurhat District and near to the Indian border. According to our findings from participatory rapid appraisal (PRA), Uttar Jahanpur consists of 215 households. The northern part of Bangladesh is the poorest region of the country.

In 2013, as our goal was to analyse what types of changes had taken place and the impacts of these, we decided to return to the same study sites. This has helped us in the following ways.

Firstly, by going back to the same study sites, we have been able to collect longitudinal data which has helped us to explore how and why the quality of the livelihoods in the study sites is changing over

time. We have tried to interview the same households, which has helped us to understand the changes they are going through. For instance, we have been able to compare the shopping habits of the same households for two consecutive years. We have also been able to understand more about how the socio-political and economic landscape of a given locality is changing over time.

Secondly, by focusing on the same research sites, we were able to ensure that other factors which might influence the findings, such as history, demography, economic activities, etc., remained the same throughout the study period.

In 2012 we focused on collecting high quality data to explain the effects of FPV in different settings. Consequently, we gave priority to depth instead of breadth, conducting a small-scale qualitative study. This has helped us significantly in finding the answers to our research questions and attaining our research goals. Learning from that experience, in 2013 we decided to maintain the same approach. As in 2012, we divided our research team into three groups, with each group staying at the research site for two weeks. The research teams were able to talk and interact with people of different occupations and other social groups and also succeeded in gaining their trust. This helped us in data collection and building our understanding of the local context. The use of participatory research tools helped us to develop an understanding the impact of the socio-economic and political context on the behaviours, actions or inaction of the local people and allowed us to collect a significant amount of reliable data through applying the various research tools explained below.

The study used qualitative research methods to collect data from the three case study communities. The research methods included focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews at the community level. The FGD participants also participated in 'market-based value chain analysis', which looks at the prices of food items from production to the retail market, and 'well-being' analysis activities. We collected cases from poor households in order to understand their coping strategies for dealing with food insecurity at a household level. A team of three researchers spent eight to 10 days in each of these communities, collecting information using these participatory tools.

4 POLICY AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

In 2012 we provided a detailed analysis of the politics and policy change that have taken place in relation to food production and distribution in Bangladesh since the country became independent. Food policy in Bangladesh has changed significantly over the last 40 years. According to the National Food Policy of 2006: '[The] Food scenario in Bangladesh has undergone major changes over the last decade, moving from a system involving large-scale government interventions in rice and wheat markets to a more market-oriented system, with public food distribution systems increasingly targeted to those households which are most in need.'⁷ In fact, over the period, the government has liberalized the grain trade; created opportunities for private sector actors to import food products and build storage; and dismantled the public food rationing system. 'Instead of using public distribution as an outlet for public food procurement and price support, the emphasis has shifted toward strengthening social safety nets and disaster mitigation programs, and procurement and stocking are now being carried out up to the level necessary to sustain those programs.'⁸

The current policy regime emphasizes food security, which has been redefined as the scenario '...when all people at all times have availability of and access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active, healthy and productive life'.⁹ This definition identifies three key factors associated with the concept of food security, namely:

- Availability, which means that adequate food grains will be available to the citizens of the country all the time;
- Access, i.e. the citizens will have access to this 'available' food;
- Utilization, i.e. the food products will meet the dietary and nutritional needs of the citizens.

The government of Bangladesh has adopted various measures to try to tackle food price increases, which can be categorized as follows:

- Active intervention in the food grain market. This includes activities such as stocking food grains; signing inter-governmental contracts with other countries; selling rice at less than market rates, for example through initiatives such as 'Open Market Sale' (OMS) and 'Fair Price Market', etc.;
- Encouraging private sector actors to participate in the food market;
- Introducing new safety net programmes or expanding the coverage of the existing ones;
- Providing incentives to the farmers for increasing rice production.

In terms of political events and policy changes that may have affected food price volatility between 2012 and 2013, we have identified four as particularly important.

1. Boosting agricultural production: Since Bangladesh's independence in 1971, the government has pursued proactive policies to boost agricultural production. These have included increased and regular supplies of inputs such as credit, irrigation, and fertilizers. The Bangladesh Bank (the central bank) issued a directive to commercial banks to increase disbursement of agricultural credit to meet the working capital needs of small and marginal farmers, particularly targeting areas affected by the floods and the cyclone. Many private sector commercial banks (which did not have their branches in rural areas) channelled agricultural credit through NGOs engaged in micro-credit operations. The government also provided (for the first time) a subsidy on diesel used in irrigation. This was provided directly to farmers and amounted to BDT 2,500 million in 2007–2008. The 20 per cent subsidy for electricity used in irrigation was also continued.¹⁰

In the last year, the government also maintained a subsidy on urea fertilizers despite the rapid rise in the price of urea on the world market. Indeed, the subsidy on urea increased to nearly 80 per cent of the procurement cost. Due to this very high level of subsidy, the government had to ration the distribution of urea fertilizer. As a result, domestic urea prices remained relatively stable. Our research in Khulna and Naogaon shows that these actions have been effective. In all the study sites, people considered that the price of fertilizer and other necessary agricultural inputs had decreased when compared with the previous year, and that this had increased overall agricultural production. However, we also observed that despite this increase in production, farmers did not receive fair prices for their products. Government policies determining purchasing processes and prices for paddy and other agricultural products are not always being followed. Crop hoarders still play a dominant role in rural areas. Therefore, although government actions have reduced the price of agricultural inputs and supported increased agricultural production, our research indicates that farmers are not benefiting fully from this.

2. Maintaining foodgrain stocks: A second important step taken by the government since 2009 is to ensure adequate rice supplies in the market. Learning from the mistake of 2007,¹¹ the government that came into power in 2009 has attempted to maintain a healthy stock of food grains, and to increase its stocking capacity. A recent study on food rights in Bangladesh states that to ensure food security the government needs to maintain a stock of 33 lac¹² metric tonnes (MT) of food grains. Currently, the government can stock up to 19 lac MT and is dependent on the private sector for the remainder. Maintaining this stock of rice helps the government to control food prices, especially in times of crisis. When the price of rice goes up and it becomes difficult for the citizens to buy it at a reasonable price, the government can lower the price either by ensuring adequate supply, or by selling rice at a lower price to the citizens. Providing food at lower prices to the lower-income groups who were hard hit by the price increases is a major strategy of the government. In the last few years, the government has extended its Public Food Grain Distribution System (PFDS)¹³. However, our study shows that this PFDS is accessible only to the poor living in urban areas and that rural households are not benefiting from it.

3. New import arrangements: Also since 2008, the government has adopted another short-term approach to deal with the food crisis. Government-to-government (G2G) deals with different countries allow Bangladesh to increase the security of its imported food supply. This was a result of the 2007 crisis, when India refused to provide rice to Bangladesh. The G2Gs allow Bangladesh to import and buy rice from other countries quickly. The government started to sign G2Gs in 2009, and since then they have been very useful in dealing with crises. In 2012, the government signed a G2G with Thailand. Moreover, a memorandum of understanding on rice exports was exchanged under which Bangladesh was planning to import 300,000–400,000 MT of rice from Thailand.

4. Popular protests: Protests have indirectly affected how the government has handled food price volatility. Although most of these have taken place in the garments sector, other occupational groups have also signalled their discontent with high food prices. A number of protest events have taken place. The garment workers took to the street demanding higher wages and other benefits. The unrest took place in Ashulia (an area of readymade garment belt a few kilometres from Dhaka) and continued between 12 and 17 June 2012. Although no long-term solution has been achieved, in the short term, wages and salaries have increased in the garment sector, allowing garment workers to deal with FPV more effectively than their rural counterparts.

The discussion above indicates that although some policy changes have taken place in the last few years, in almost all cases these have positively affected only the urban poor. The rural poor have not benefited from the changes, as a result of which they have remained extremely vulnerable to food price volatility. The next section discusses the overall effects of food price volatility on both the urban and rural poor.

5 BASIC NEEDS AND WELL-BEING TRENDS

In our 2012 report, we used Maslow's Need Hierarchy model¹⁴ to explain the well-being trends among the people in the study areas. We concluded that people living in Khulna and Naogaon were situated at the lowest level of the need hierarchy table as they were mainly concerned about physiological and safety needs:

*'People living in Khulna are emphasizing their physiological and safety needs. Given the situation within which these people are living, it is quite natural that they will concentrate more on these particular levels. The natural disaster has really shaken them up and has destroyed their homes and their usual ways of doing business. Facing a new, complicated, and difficult situation, they are concerned about their physical needs and as such they are now at the physiological and safety levels of Maslow's need hierarchy. The same pattern can be identified in the case of Naogaon. Like Khulna, people here are also worried about their jobs and they are finding it difficult to maintain a minimal standard of living. They too are at the physiological and safety levels.'*¹⁵

In Dhaka, in contrast, we witnessed a slight improvement in comparison with the other sites. Respondents in Dhaka had satisfied their physiological and safety needs and were moving towards the next level. However, we also found that the city dwellers were afraid of being evicted and that was a key safety concern for them.

In 2013 we found that in the study site in Dhaka the residents were moving upward in the hierarchy ladder, while in the rural study sites we did not witness any improvement. In fact, in the rural study sites respondents were concerned that their well-being trend might not improve at all in the near future. Our study showed that people living in Dhaka had experienced some significant improvements in their day-to-day life. Most importantly, they were no longer facing the threat of eviction.¹⁶ In contrast, in Khulna, we did not find any improvement in the lives of the people. Most of the people living in this area are poor day labourers and face extreme difficulties. Our study revealed that over the last year the amount of aid or support from the government and NGOs has declined. The research participants explained how over the last few years, they had received aid because of being an Aila-affected area. Aid came not only from the NGOs and the government but, 'During that that time, all rich people provided for relief support. People donated tins, food preserves, utensils, drinking water, money. Since last year, these supports are not coming that much and as a result, people's sufferings increased'. At the same time, the participants pointed out that the government is not implementing employment-generating social safety net programmes in this area and consequently, their employment opportunities have declined. However, according to one FGD participant, 'NGOs are working on development projects instead of giving relief. For example, EEP-Shiree (a UK Aid-funded poverty alleviation programme) provides money for income generation, SHUSHILAN (an NGO) offers employment to women, BRAC provides poor people employment through their TUP program, and JSS is providing vegetation training and seeds. They all are trying to [improve] the poverty situation'. However, it is not clear whether these types of assistance will help the poor in the long run. Our study shows that the poor people, who are in need of instant cash to buy foods or other things, often spend the loans provided instead of investing them in income-generating activities. For instance, one NGO gives each beneficiary BDT 4,200 and 11 ducks. According to one beneficiary, the money was quickly spent, and out of the 11 ducks: 'I have five ducks. Three of them died, and I sold three for money.'

A similar conclusion can be drawn about Naogaon. Most of the people living in this area rely on agricultural work and during the last year, according to them, their income did not increase at all. Furthermore, adverse weather hampered crop production. As one FGD participant pointed out, 'I

expected to grow 200kg of paddy on my cultivable land but due to the weather, I ended up producing only 60kg.' The agricultural day labourers also pointed out that their income did not increase at all and given that the price of food items and other necessities are increasing at an alarming rate, they cannot make ends meet. In this kind of situation people usually take loans from NGOs or their neighbours. When they fail to pay back that loan, they migrate to other cities to earn money and survive. In the case study in Box 1 a participant in Naogaon describes this situation:

Box 1: A rural household struggles to survive

One of the FGD participants described his situation in the following way: 'Just six months before *Eid-ul-Fitr* I had to arrange money for my daughter's wedding ceremony. As a result, during the time of Eid, I did not have enough money. However, as per the custom, I had to send new clothes, vermicelli, sugar, to my daughter-in-law's house and if I had failed to do that, my daughter would lose face. For this reason I had to borrow BDT 1,500 from my neighbour. Moreover after the Eid festival my daughter and son-in-law came to visit us. I did not have any money and had to borrow BDT 400 more from another neighbour for buying groceries, chicken and some fishes. They stayed for seven days and after that I found out I had no money, I could not buy daily groceries and in the meantime, the neighbours started to put pressure on me to repay their money. I could not find any solution and finally left my house (my daughter and son-in-law were still staying) and went to Dhaka. I switched my cell phone off and kept it like that for seven days so that no one could reach me. In Dhaka, I started pulling rickshaws and earned some money. When I had enough, I came back to my village and repaid my loans. My wife, daughter and son-in-law became angry with me for this and since then, my son-in-law has not come to my house. My wife also quarrelled with me several times because of this incident. Thus because of increased prices, our simple household relationships are becoming complex and it isn't possible for us to live a normal life.'

The case above shows how difficult people's lives have become due to FPV. They have become extremely vulnerable. Whereas, in the past, events like sudden illness or natural disaster could trigger a crisis, right now, even a visit from relatives can cause major economic problems. We found that in both Khulna and Naogaon, people worry if they think their relatives are coming to stay for few days.

In contrast, respondents living in the urban slums had experienced significant improvement in their living standards. In the 2012 report, we indicated that for urban dwellers the definition of well-being includes a safe living place (without fear of eviction), job opportunities, access to utilities and educational institutions for their children. In 2013 we found that they had managed to deal with some of these problems. They no longer live with a fear of eviction, they have access to jobs and their living conditions have significantly improved. Making a comparison between 2012 and 2013, one FGD participant living in Dhaka stated: 'Last year, we did not have access to pure water and there were no sanitary latrines. As a result, the slum dwellers had to bring water from the nearby markets, colony, mosques etc. Due to the use of polluted water and the bad environment, many diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, and other water-borne diseases often broke out and we had to spend a major portion of our income on medical treatment. If someone brought a medical team from outside, a huge crowd would gather to take medicine from them. But now DSK [an NGO] has changed the scenario of the slum by providing water and establishing sanitary latrines. Now dysentery or diarrhoea don't break out in an epidemic form.'

In addition to these changes, the slum dwellers have also experienced increases in their wages and income. According to one FGD participant, 'This year, a helper¹⁷ usually earns BDT 4,000 to 4,500 excluding overtime, whereas last year this was only BDT 3,000 including overtime. Including overtime, an operator¹⁸ earned BDT 5,000 last year but this current year, he or she earns BDT 7,000. Wages for housekeeping have also increased, and BDT 500–600 is now the minimum wage for all types of

household chores. The earnings of the rickshaw pullers have almost doubled compared with last year. A rickshaw puller can earn BDT 350–400 per day excluding the money he has to pay back to the owner of the garage or rickshaw, which is BDT 80. The daily wage for wage labourers has also increased.’ Our key informant interviews also confirmed this trend.

Furthermore, we also found that in the urban slums we researched for this project, NGO intervention is significantly affecting the lives of the people in a number of ways. First of all, because of NGO programmes, the slum dwellers now have access to drinking water which has allowed them to save some money as they no longer need to buy drinking water externally. Second, some NGOs are playing an important role by creating employment opportunities through providing training and financial support. For instance, one participant explained how she took a loan of BDT 12,000 from an NGO and bought a rickshaw for her husband. As a result, her husband can now earn a significant amount of money and can contribute to the family expenditure.

Finally, even though this point of view is not widely shared among the slum-dwellers, the leaders of the Slum Resettlement and Savings Committee are of the opinion that NGO intervention has brought about fundamental change in the attitudes of the people. For instance, one of them said that, ‘Poor people like us depend on NGOs mostly. Since they started working here, our lifestyles went through significant changes. In fact, they helped us in developing a collective identity which was missing before. We used to live as individuals and we even did not help each other. We had no leaders and we thought that if we started to follow one person, he would control everything and we will not gain anything. However, NGOs have changed us and helped us to be united. Due to their assistance, we succeeded in developing organizations like the Slum Rehabilitation and Savings Society. We now look after each other and their efforts are much appreciated in the slum community.’ However, this particular effect of NGO intervention should be considered with caution since other respondents did not mention it. In fact, some respondents indicated that even after the improvements in their living conditions, they rarely helped their neighbours.

We identify three likely reasons for the reported significant qualitative changes in the living standard of respondents in the urban research site:

- a. The absence of the threat of eviction, combined with better access to utility services have allowed people to reduce costs of living and encouraged them to find jobs outside the slums;
- b. Increases in wages and salaries;
- c. NGO interventions.

In reality, a combination of these three factors has allowed the slum dwellers to enjoy a better living standard when compared with respondents in the rural research sites. This has allowed the dwellers to cut costs and also encouraged them to develop their economic capacity. In contrast, the living standards of the rural residents of Naogaon and Khulna did not change at all and in fact declined in some cases. The farmers’ income has not increased even though the price of agricultural inputs has decreased. As we will discuss in the next section, the income of the wage labourers also did not change much and as a result, a number of them were forced to migrate to the nearby cities. Similarly, NGO interventions or loans did not have any long-term effect. When people take loans from NGOs, instead of making an investment, they tend to spend it to buy daily necessities. Consequently, the respondents in the rural research sites were faced with a difficult situation. In times of FPV, which continued in 2013, they were ill-equipped to deal with food price increases.

As a result of improvements in their situation, our research found that respondents in the urban area were able to save some money every month, allowing them to start to plan for the future. During our interviews and FGDs, a number of participants indicated this. According to a leader of the Slum Resettlement Savings Committee: ‘In the past (until 2003), this slum was evicted a few times. This

had economic consequences, since people had to rebuild their houses. They had been losing their money by doing these things. In recent years, they do not face any problem like that. They can even save some money, and interestingly they are coping with the price increases. People have now enough money for living a decent life. If you enter their house you will see some furniture. Earthen-floored rooms are not present in the slum.'

In contrast, the rural respondents were much less able to make savings or investments. They were concentrating on ensuring an income which would allow them to live on a day-to-day basis. Whereas in Dhaka, respondents were hopeful about the future and were trying to save some money for future needs, such kind of planning was mostly absent in the other two study sites. One FGD participant in Khulna explained it in this way: 'We live from day to day and our only concern is survival. As we have to think about how I will survive today, how can I think about tomorrow?'

In the next section, we will present and discuss our study findings with regard to the increases in food prices. We will explore whether the prices of food and non-food items have increased in the urban or the rural areas. We also try to identify and analyse the strategies adopted by respondents to deal with FPV.

6 CHANGING FOOD PRICES AND CHANGING FOOD HABITS

In comparison with 2012, we found that the price of food and other goods had increased in all three study areas. In order to understand the extent of the price rises, we asked respondents how much they were spending to buy a specific food item or other goods in 2013, and how much they spent in 2012 for the same item.

In each site, we conducted at least four FGDs, allowing us to check whether there was variation in the statements provided by the participants with regard to price changes. Table 1 and Table 2 provide a comparison of the prices of different food and non-food items in the three research sites in 2012 and 2013. We have used exact prices in BDT where we found consistency among the FGD participants. Where respondents agreed that prices had increased but differed on the exact amount, we have come to a general conclusion. In addition, wherever possible we checked the participants' statements against our dataset of 2012 prices.

Table 1: Comparing prices of different food items, 2012 and 2013

Item	Dhaka		Khulna		Naogaon	
	2013 market price (BDT)	2012 market price (BDT)	2013 market price (BDT)	2012 market price (BDT)	2013 market price (BDT)	2012 market price (BDT)
Rice (BR-28)	38/kg	35/kg	34/kg	30/kg	35/kg	28-30/kg
Rice (<i>miniket</i>)	45/kg	37/kg				
Lentil (<i>masoor</i>)	Local 110/kg Indian 80/kg	Local 100/kg Indian 80/kg			80/kg	88/kg
Fish (<i>pangash</i>)	120/kg	80/kg			100/kg	100/kg
Fish (silver carp)					100/kg	60/kg
Fish (<i>hilsha</i>)	300/kg	250/kg				
Fish (<i>hilsha</i> - small)	120/kg	80/kg				
Prawn (big)	600/kg	400/kg				
Prawn (small)			120/kg	80/kg		
Fish (<i>chapila</i>)	150/kg	150/kg				
Fish (<i>tilapia</i>)	140/kg	100/kg	80/kg	60/kg		
Egg	120/dozen	120/dozen				

Chicken liver	150/kg	110/kg				
Chicken (broiler)	180/kg	160/kg			150/kg	100/kg
Chicken (local)	400/kg	300/kg			400/kg	400/kg
Beef	280/kg	270/kg			240/kg	240/kg
Beef head ¹⁹	170/kg	160/kg				
Eggplant	25/kg	35/kg			20-25/kg	15-20/kg
Leafy vegetables	15/bundle	20/ bundle				
Papaya	15	Price has reduced				
Ridge gourd			12/kg	8/kg		
Sponges			13/kg	8/kg		
Tomato	80/kg	30/kg				
Red spinach	10/fist	10/3				
Onion	70/kg	26/kg	80/kg	20/kg	60/kg	24/kg
Potato	16/kg	25/kg	16/kg	12/kg	10/kg	20/kg
Vegetable <i>Potol</i>					10-12/kg	15-20/kg
Vegetable <i>Kawra</i>			10/kg	12/kg		
Vegetable <i>Arum</i>			15/kg	20/kg		
Sugar	50/kg	60/kg	48/kg	40/kg	45/kg	58/kg
Mustard oil	200/litre	180/litre			70/litre	70/litre
Soy bean oil	200/litre	120/litre	100/litre	80/litre	110/litre	
Kerosene oil	75/litre	70/litre				
Ginger	200/kg	70/kg			200/kg	100/kg
Garlic			70/kg	40/kg	80/kg	40/kg
Green pepper	30/kg	80/kg	40/kg	20/kg		
Turmeric	150/kg	180/kg	In general, price has increased			
Milk	100/litre	64/litre	60/litre	50/litre	35/litre	30-35/litre

Table 2: Comparing prices of different non-food items, 2012 and 2013

Item	Dhaka		Khulna		Naogaon	
	2013 market price (BDT)	2012 market price (BDT)	2013 market price (BDT)	2012 market price (BDT)	2013 market price (BDT)	2012 market price (BDT)
Type of Fertilizer						
Urea	NA	NA	17/kg	20/kg	16/kg	20/kg
Triple Super Phosphate TSP			16/kg	28/kg	12/kg	16/kg
Double Super Phosphate DSP					26/kg	30/kg
Diammonium Phosphate DAP					34/kg	30/kg
Pesticide (granular)	NA	NA	130/kg	100/kg	200/kg	200/kg
Pesticide (liquid)					800–900/litre	800–900/litre
Irrigation (rent of machine)	NA	NA	70/hour	50/hour	120–140/hour	80–90/hour
Rent	1500/month	1200/month				
Fuel	Kerosene 80–85/litre	Kerosene 55–60/litre	Kerosene 70/litre	Kerosene 50/litre	Diesel 71/litre	Diesel 62/litre
Cooking (fuel wood)	10–11/kg	7–8/kg	Forest wood 250/boat ²⁰ <i>Shirish</i> wood 170/ maund ²¹	Forest wood ²² 150/boat <i>Shirish wood</i> 130/maund	None	None

Educational expenses (tuition fees)	Varies but the price of educational equipment and tuition fees have increased	Varies			55–200/month	55–200/month
Exercise book	100	50/60	Price has increased		Price has remained the same	
Ballpoint pen	7	5				
Notebook	200	150	In general, price has increased			
Health expenses	350–400/month	300/month	700/month	500/month	Expenses have increased in general	

On average, Table 1 shows that the price of food items increased in all the research sites. However, if we look into the items available in the market place, it becomes evident that people living in the slums of Dhaka had more options to choose from. Having more options allows people to switch from one food item to another in response to price rises, or if their income changes. For instance, in 2012 in the urban research site, although *hilsha* fish was available, people could not afford it. Instead they mainly depended on cheaper fishes like *tilapia*. In 2013, due to a rise in their income levels, people were buying *hilsha* fish. Even relatively poor people were buying small *hilsha (jatka)* fish. This practice of switching between different foods was particularly common for vegetables. According to one respondent, ‘Last year, eggplants were our favourite vegetable as they were cheaper. However, it is not really good for health and we took it as it was the only vegetable that we could afford. But this year, papaya is actually cheaper than the eggplants. As it is good for health and digestion, we buy it regularly.’ In comparison, in Khulna and Naogaon, choices are very limited. If the price of one particular food item increases, it becomes extremely difficult for the people to survive. For instance, in Khulna *tilapia* is the main variety of fish that is available. People cannot switch to any other fish even when the price becomes really high.

Table 2 shows that the price of agricultural inputs had declined during the study period. However, this did not really affect the price of the staple food, rice, which increased in all three study areas. However, this increase in the price of rice did not result in income increases for the respondents who depend on farming for a living. This indicates that farmers selling rice are not able to access markets or to sell their rice for the right price.

Although the prices of food and non-food items increased in both the rural and urban areas, we found that people living in the urban areas were better equipped to deal with the price increases, because their incomes had increased and because there were more different foods available to choose from. In 2013, access to food markets had become a little easier for the urban dwellers, while it had either remained the same or declined for the rural residents.

The availability of income and of different food choices determine the strategies adopted by respondents and their specific eating habits. In order to understand the effects of these two factors, we compared the shopping list of two typical families from two of our study sites.

Table 3 shows the typical shopping list of a Dhaka household of five people (husband, wife, two children and the wife's niece) in 2012. The income pattern of this household changed between 2012 and 2013. In 2012, only the female household members had a regular income (the wife and her niece). The household head was unemployed, and the total monthly income for the family was BDT 7,800. They used to spend BDT 5–6,000 (on average BDT 5,300) per month on food items. In addition, their children's education cost BDT 1,100 per month, and they had some other non-food expenses including medical expenses. It was extremely difficult for them to live on the meagre income of BDT 7,800. In fact, things became so difficult for them that at one point the head of the household had to borrow BDT 25,000 to meet additional expenses.

Table 3: Typical daily shopping list (except salt and spices) for an urban household in 2012

Item	Quantity	Price (BDT)
Rice (<i>guti rice</i>)	2kg	60
Fish (iced <i>rupchada</i> fish)	750g	90
Oil (soybean)	250g	30
Oil (kerosene)	A small quantity	5
Salt (packet)	1kg	30
Eggplant	1kg	24
Green chili	100g	8
Potato	1kg	24
Ginger	A quantity	4
Spice <i>jira</i>	A quantity	3
Vegetable <i>bitter gourd</i>	500g	12
Total		290

Apart from rice, fish and *jira*, other items on the shopping list were sufficient for two to three days. One kilogram of salt was sufficient for 10–12 days. However, in 2013, BDT 290 would not be sufficient for 2–3 days' shopping. A typical shopping list for the family in 2013 is set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Typical shopping list for an urban household in 2013

Item	Quantity	Price (BDT)
Rice (BR-28)	2kg	76
fish (iced <i>hilsha</i>)	400g	170
Potato	500g	8
Papaya	1200g	18
Garlic (spotted, a bit blackish)	250g	13
Ginger	Small quantity	5
Chili powder	Small quantity	5
Total		295

Table 4 shows that the household is now buying better quality rice at extra cost. As one household member stated, 'My son cannot eat thick rice. He hated it so much that often he skipped meals and

took his meal only when he became too hungry. As he is growing up, his taste is changing. Last year we had no option but this year our condition has improved and so I have decided to buy thinner rice. Because of changing the rice type, this year we can eat more with satisfaction.’

Second, the type of fish has also changed. Even though the price of *hilsha* fish is higher, as they can afford it and their children like the fish, the household has decided to buy this type. In 2013 the household was also eating meat at least once a week.

Thirdly, the household’s choice of vegetables depends on the ‘availability’ factor. At the time of the research, papaya was cheaper than other vegetables, which is why they decided to buy it. If the price of papaya goes up, the family will shift to a comparatively cheaper vegetable.

In 2013, this household was spending BDT 8–9,000 per month on food items. At the same time, their other expenses have also increased. For example, their educational expenses had doubled to BDT 2,250. Altogether, the household now spends BDT 13,430 per month. Despite the fact that their expenses had almost doubled, the household was managing well and even able to save almost BDT 1,770 per month. The salaries of both the female earning household members had increased in the year under study, while the household head had been able to get a job. He had been appointed as a driver earning BDT 8,000 per month. Therefore, in this particular case, the household has managed to deal with the price increases effectively.

In the rural area of Khulna, the situation was different. Table 5 shows a typical day’s shopping for a household of five members in 2013.

Table 5: Typical shopping list for a rural household in 2013

Item	Quantity	Price (BDT)
Onion	250g	20
Garlic	100g	6
Spices	Not specified	10
Soybean oil	500g	48
Sugar	500g	24
Kawra	1kg	10
Potato	1kg	16
Rice	2.5kg	85
Fish (tilapia)	500g	30
Sponge	1kg	12
Ridge gourd	1kg	13
Okra	1kg	18
Red chilli	250g	10
Total cost		302

Table 6 shows that in 2012 the same shopping would have cost rather less, at BDT 243.

Table 6: Typical shopping list for a rural household in 2012

Item	Quantity	Price (BDT)
Onion	250g	8
Garlic	100g	4
Spices for meat	More than this year	10
Soybean oil	500g	40
Sugar	500g	20
Kawra	1kg	5
Potato	1kg	15
Rice	2.5kg	80
Fish (tilapia)	500g	25
Sponge	1kg	8
Ridge gourd	1kg	8
Okra	1kg	15
Red chilli	250g	5
Total cost		243

The Khulna household has a monthly income of BDT 5,000, and this income did not increase at all between 2012 and 2013. As a result, with the same income, they are now trying to cover increased food expenses.

Our research revealed that due to the high prices, most of the people living in the area could not afford to buy meat, eggs or fish. According to one fisherman, 'Almost 90 percent of the people living in this area are poor. The income of the poor people has not increased at all or the rise in income is insignificant. As a result, we normally avoid buying meat. Few of us try to eat it once a month.' This is severely affecting the health of the people living in this area. One of our key informants, a mother of three children, said, 'We eat vegetables but we do need other nutritious foods in our body as well. As we cannot eat milk, egg, fish or meat, we are getting weak. I am suffering from low pressure, dizziness, and cough-fever attacks have increased in our home.'

In 2013 there was a significant change in terms of crop production in Khulna area. As a result of Cyclone Aila, in 2012 the people living here could not grow any crops due to the intrusion of salty water in the land. However, things have started to improve, with people harvesting paddy and planting vegetables in their gardens. The gardening is mainly women's responsibility. During our focus group discussions, we found that the people in this area are primarily growing vegetables rather than buying them. During the post-Aila rehabilitation period, NGOs trained people how to growing vegetables at home. In response to food price volatility, people have started doing this.

In Khulna, the 'availability' factor also plays an important role in determining food habits. In this particular area, people rely on certain vegetables including *kawra* and *arum*. People in the other two study sites did not mention these vegetables. In other words, due to the availability of different kinds of vegetables, people can to a certain extent deal with FPV even when their living standards have not improved at all.

We observed the worst situation in Naogaon, where respondents were not normally able to eat meat or fish. According to one FGD participant, 'You know, Bangladeshi people are known as *mache bhate bangali* (rice and fish are staples for Bengali people). Those days are gone. Just a few years ago, we

made peace with the fact that fish is a luxury and we transformed into *dale bhate bangali* (rice and lentils are staples for Bengali people). And now, we cannot even buy lentils. We are left with rice only.' This situation is affecting the people living here severely. We found that a large number of people living in this locality were reportedly suffering from calcium deficiency.

The discussion in this section shows that the interaction between living standards and food availability is determining the strategies adopted by the people in terms of their food habits. We show this in Table 7.

Table 7: The relationship between living standards and food availability

Food availability Living standards	Available	Non-available
Improving	Dhaka (people have the ability to buy their choice of food and can change their choices in times of price volatility)	N/A in this study
Deteriorating	Khulna (people may not buy the necessary food and have limited choices in times of price volatility)	Naogaon (People do not have the ability to buy sufficient food and do not have choices in times of price volatility)

7 CHANGES IN INCOME STRUCTURE AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

INCOME STRUCTURE AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN THE URBAN STUDY SITE

The previous sections indicated that even though the prices of daily necessities and other products had increased in all the study areas, people living in Dhaka city managed to cope with the situation more successfully in comparison with the other study sites, as a result of significant increases in salary and wages of the urban dwellers compared to the other places. During our FGDs, relying on the perception and opinion of the people living there, our researchers developed a categorization based on income level. According to this, people living in this area can be categorized into four groups:

A. Very good income Those who can save 1,000–2,000 BDT per month, work in a good working environment, own a bed, TV or fridge, eat three meals a day, and have some savings or own a room in the slum fall in this category. This group earns more than BDT 15,000 per month.

B. Average income Those who can eat three meals a day, own a small cot, cupboard or TV, educate their children, and have some small savings belong to this category. People belonging to this group earn between BDT 10,000 and 15,000 per month.

C. Low income Those who are widowed or abandoned, can barely run the family, have no savings, own a broken cot or no cot, and do not own a TV or mobile phone belong to this group. They typically earn between BDT 5,000 and 10,000 per month.

D. Very low income Disabled, elderly people, widows, economically inactive people, unwell people, and people with no family fall into this category. They typically have no savings and cannot afford to buy a fan or pay their electricity bill. This group of people earns less than BDT 5,000 per month.

The FGD participants said that up until 2012, most people living in the slum belonged to the B and C categories. However, the situation improved a lot in 2013, and the number of people belonging to groups A and B has increased while the number of people belonging to groups C and D has decreased. Table 8 shows the social mobility of people living in the slum. However, it is important to note that the numbers provided below have been developed solely based on respondents' perceptions, and are not based on large-scale data collection.

Table 8: Poverty trends amongst participating households, Dhaka

Category	Percentage of participants belonging to this group in 2010	Percentage of participants belonging to this group in 2013
A	15	18
B	25	32
C	50	45
D	10	5

Our household interviews strongly supported these perception-based findings. For instance, when we interviewed members of one household last year, the husband was unemployed and the total household income was less than BDT 10,000 per month (belonging to Group C). However, this year we learned that the husband had got a job driving a motor car and was earning BDT 8,000 per month. The total average monthly income of the household had increased to BDT 17,000. Similarly, in another household, the household head (who was previously unemployed) had bought a rickshaw by taking loan from an NGO. The average monthly income of that household had also increased.

However, the poor are still vulnerable to adverse situations such as sudden illness and/or accidents, and these events often jeopardize their survival strategies. For instance, one man who we interviewed in 2012 used to drive a private car. He earned BDT 15,000 and was also given a Suzuki motorcycle to commute from his house to the office. However, eight months ago he quit his job because, 'The office was really far away from my home. Moreover, I did not have any freedom and if I ever failed to show up in time, my boss did not like that.' A few months ago, he faced other financial challenges. His son was in love with the neighbour's daughter but his neighbour did not approve of the marriage. When they got married, his neighbour lodged a case against his son, and the police were trying to arrest his son. The interviewee told his son to hide out for a while and gave him BDT 10,000 for this purpose. Later, he went to his village with his son and daughter-in-law and arranged their formal marriage ceremony. For that purpose, he spent between BDT 400,00–500,000. This was a real burden for him, especially since he had no job. At one point he started selling fruits but failed to make any profit out of it: 'The people would take fruit on credit but did not pay back. The dwellers of this slum owe me BDT 4,000–5,000 but they have not paid it off yet. If I insist on their paying what they owe, they say that the jackfruit was not good or the mango was sour. Some say, we have no money, take it later. Then I started driving a battery-powered rickshaw.' At the same time, his son had a computer shop from which he was earning BDT 6,000 per month. However, the shop was burned down in an accident and for a while the son was unable to earn anything. Currently, the interviewee earns BDT 12,000 per month from rickshaw driving while his son has got a job in a garments factory where he earns BDT 5,300 per month. His daughter-in-law teaches children and earns about BDT 900 per month. Although he is currently managing the overall expenditure, life has become more difficult for him, especially because he had to borrow money for the marriage ceremony of his son and now he has to pay it back.

It is important to note that even when the people living in the slums face shocks such as the loss of a job, or an accident, they still manage to find another job relatively quickly. There are employment options available in Dhaka and the poor try to make the best use of those. At the same time, living conditions have improved in the slums and as a result, people suffer less from critical health problems than in the past. They can now save the money previously spent on medical treatment for other purposes, such as the educational expenses of their children.

Our study also indicates that in order to live a decent life in the slums, a person needs at least BDT 10,000 per month at 2013 costs of living. Once a family reaches that threshold, they are fine. In fact,

even if their income level drops but remains above this threshold, they do not really have to worry too much. For instance, during our interview with a restaurant owner, he informed us that in 2013 he was earning BDT 25,000 per month which was lower than the previous year. However, since he was earning above the threshold level income, he was not facing particular difficulties. Conversely, our study indicates that whenever people drop below the monthly income rate of BDT 10,000 per month, they start borrowing money from their neighbours, relatives or NGOs, leading to debt problems.

INCOME STRUCTURE AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN THE RURAL STUDY SITES

In contrast with the findings in Dhaka, income opportunities have not changed in Khulna. Most (almost 90 percent) of the people living in this area are day labourers who used to work as agricultural day labourers. After Cyclone Aila, it became impossible to grow crops due to salt water intrusion and these people became jobless. They were employed by the government and NGOs for different development programmes which provided them with short-term employment opportunities. Our study shows that in 2012, when these programmes were running, they helped both the male and female residents of Khulna. By the beginning of 2013 these programmes had finished. As a result, the daily labourers in particular were facing a tough time.

Other occupational groups were also facing challenges. During the post-Aila period, the government permitted fishermen to go fishing in the Sundarbans, In 2012 these fishermen were able to earn BDT 6,000–7,000 per month. However, in 2013, the permission was withdrawn, as a result of which their source of fishing has become limited. In addition, the increase of groups demanding protection money from the fishermen has made fishing near the Sundarbans very difficult. Due to all these factors, during our 2013 research visit these fishermen were earning only BDT 5,000 per month on average.

Table 10 compares wage labour income for 2012 and 2013. It shows how the income of the daily labourers has either remained the same or in some cases declined.

Table 9: Incomes by occupation in 2012 and 2013, Khulna

Occupation	Monthly income 2013 (BDT)	Monthly income 2012 (BDT)
Day labourer	3000	4000
Day labourer	1800	1800
Day labourer	3000	3500
Day labourer	2000	2500
Day labourer	3000	3000
Day labourer	2000	2500
Day labourer	1500	1500
Day labourer	3500	3500
Fisherman	3500	3000
Day labourer	3000	3000
Day labourer	3500	3000
Day labourer	3500	3000
Teacher	3000	2000

The wage stagnation and decreases are the result of the lack of employment for wage labourers when the development projects conducted by the government and the NGOs came to an end, and agricultural production had not yet restarted. The study showed that the day labourers were left with two options. They could either look for job opportunities in the nearby districts, or they could migrate to Dhaka to look for work there. As the Chairman of the Bazar Committee pointed out, 'Those who went to the nearby districts in search for jobs were helpless. They had no other options and nothing to do. As a result, the local businessmen or their employees could easily exploit them which pushed down their wage rate.' Others went to Dhaka for short periods, where they started pulling rickshaws. During the agricultural season, these people usually come back to try to find jobs in the nearby areas.

In 2012, during the post-Aila period, we found that a number of female household members -- who in the past had never worked outside their homes -- were forced to engage in different employment generating activities and project work. However, the research in 2013 indicated that this was a short-term solution. Once the projects ended, the female household members returned to their homes, and are now primarily undertaking household work such as cleaning or taking care of the elderly and children. Shopping is normally undertaken by men, except when the men are away for work.

However, homestead gardening has become really popular in Khulna and this is one area where women are playing a leading role. As a result, women play an important economic role since the vegetables produced in these gardens help the household to reduce the cost of food items. As the Chairman of the Bazar committee said, 'Women are the main actors in this kind of food collection. This scenario was not seen in this village in the last years because this kind of cultivation was not available then in every household.'

In Naogaon the situation was similar to Khulna. People living in this area also mostly rely on agricultural production and we found that their income had not increased at all. Wages have remained static at BDT 150–200 per day. Most respondents stated that their income had remained the same and as a result, they were facing huge difficulties in coping with price increases. We observed certain trends in job search and income opportunities in Naogaon (and in Khulna too). The FGD participants stated that due to heavy reliance on agricultural activities, they only have jobs for three to six months in the locality. As a result, when they are not engaged in agricultural production, they rarely engage in any economic activities.

In addition, agricultural production is not currently cost-covering: 'For paddy cultivation, we have to buy urea fertilizer for BDT 1,200 per sack. In most cases, we do not have enough money and have to borrow to buy that. The problem is, later we have to sell the paddy for only BDT 500–600 per 40kg. Now tell me, how can we survive?'

In the 2012 study, we argued that this situation is discouraging people from engaging in agricultural activities.

'As the price remains low, we cannot make any profit. For instance, this year we have to spend BDT 1,500 per 40kg for jute cultivation but now we are selling that for only BDT 1,000. As we aren't getting any profit from cultivation, a lot of people are moving towards Dhaka city to pull rickshaws. Moreover, many people are migrating to Dhaka city with their families to work in the garment factories.'

According to our respondents, these people are doing better:

'A lot of people of this village have migrated to Dhaka city to work in the garment factories. Many of them have taken their families with them. In general, a garment worker can earn minimum BDT 5,000–6,000 per month. Those who have migrated to Dhaka city have already built fine houses on their own lands. And they are the only group of people who have some savings. Moreover, after suffering huge loss in farming some people have sold their cultivable lands and now they are doing lease farming or working as day labourers.'

The discussion above indicates that only the slum dwellers of Dhaka city are succeeding in managing their livelihoods in an effective way and in effect, they are doing quite well. In contrast, we did not observe any income increase in the other two study sites where respondents were just surviving in a difficult time of FPV.

8 LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR FOOD SECURITY AND HUNGER

Our 2012 report provided an in-depth discussion about the policy framework in Bangladesh. In addition to ensuring adequate supply of food and ensuring access to market, a key focus of the Government of Bangladesh is to ensure that the citizens are maintaining an adequate level of nutrition. This focus on nutrition is relatively recent (it was incorporated in the 2006 Food Policy) and requires a much bigger role on the part of government. To ensure that this particular goal is being achieved it is necessary to monitor whether citizens are able to gain access to food markets and to the right kinds of foods. This expands the role of the government from that of just ensuring food security.

Our discussion above indicates that so far the Government of Bangladesh mainly concentrates on ensuring an adequate supply of food grains in the market. The new initiatives taken by the government this year are mostly a reaction to possible food scarcity. Even when the government becomes proactive, its main goal has been to ensure an adequate supply of staple food items in the market. In addition to that, the price control mechanism adopted by the government is not very effective and our study did not show any effect of these control mechanisms. In both the rural and the urban areas the people we interviewed stated that even though they had heard that the government had adopted measures to control the price increase, they had never encountered any price monitoring authority and they did not believe that the government's actions were helping them in a situation of FPV. Our study also suggests that even though the government has been successful in controlling the price of agricultural inputs, this has not helped the farmers to get cost-covering prices for their crops.

Our analysis of the current food habits of the people living in the research areas shows that the issue of nutrition has not become important yet. In fact, in the rural areas of Khulna and Naogaon, people have pointed out that they are not receiving nutritious foods and as a result, their physical condition is declining. At the same time, if we analyse the government documents available online through the Food Directorate's website, it is clear that nutrition has a lower priority for the government than food availability overall. For instance, a document published by the Food Directorate which described the success of the government in the last four years concentrated only on the government's enhanced capability to deal with food-related shocks, and to stock more food products etc.. The government's role in terms of ensuring access to nutritious food was not mentioned.²³

Our discussion so far indicates that when compared with last year, there has not been any significant qualitative change in terms of ensuring efficient and effective distribution of food products, controlling food prices in the local markets, or providing nutritious food items to the people. In our 2012 report, after careful analysis of the policy framework, we argued that:

- Given that the government is focusing on controlling the price of staple foods, it has concentrated on increasing production of these particular types of foods, mainly rice. However, there is a trade-off involved here which we described as 'sacrificing quality in exchange for quantity'. We argued that 'increasing food production will ensure people's food security only when the production of staple food is supplemented by the production of other necessary and nutritious food products.'
- We also raised concerns about the lack of price monitoring mechanisms, especially in the rural areas.

It is important to note that nothing has happened in relation to these issues. Although respondents in the urban research site told us that in some cases they had heard about price monitoring, it was not

extensive or regular. And as in the previous year, price monitoring was completely absent in the rural areas. This raises a number of important questions. Is the government being held accountable for its actions in the food policy realm? If so, what process has been followed and what is the level and extent of participation of poor people in this accountability mechanism? What do poor people living in urban slums or in rural areas think about accountability? Whom do they hold accountable and how?

In this section, we try to develop an answer to these questions. Our main focus here is to explore how poor people define the concept of rights and accountability, how or whether they interact with the local or national level actors who have the responsibility for implementing policies, and whether they hold these actors accountable.

The concept of accountability is considered a core element of good governance. In general, the concept requires that the government will answer for its actions and thus be held accountable to the citizens. In our study areas, we have observed the development of an interesting perception about the concept of accountability. This can be defined as a blend between traditional, i.e. value-based, and electoral accountability, mediated through a sense of fatalistic attitude.

We started our discussion about the concept of accountability by asking respondents whether they considered access to food as a 'right'. The overwhelming response was that yes, access to food is a right. As one respondent pointed out, 'There cannot be any question about that. Can anyone survive without food? No. So of course, it is our right.' In both urban and rural areas, respondents pointed out that access to food is a key basic right and that to survive as a decent human being this right has to be achieved. As one FGD participant in Naogaon who relies on agricultural work to survive stated, 'As a human being, it is my right to have three meals a day properly, suitable shelter, children's proper education and at least one new cloth [item of clothing] in a year.'

We asked respondents to explain where these rights come from. In our three study areas we found two different points of views. To the people living in the slums and to the farmers of Naogaon, these rights are God-given and it is ultimately God's wish that the basic rights of the people should be met. From this perspective, the government is the 'agent' of God, and has the responsibility to ensure that these God-given rights are being implemented. From the perspective of political science, this is not a new concept. In the literature, the ruler as an agent of God is an idea that has been current since ancient times. However, in our study areas we observed the blending of electoral accountability with the original concept. We found that even though people consider access to food as a God-given right, they do not forget their role as the electorate.

In both Dhaka and Naogaon, this theological standpoint has allowed the citizens to develop a normative perspective in regard to the role played by the government. In all of our study areas, we have found that people developed a 'moral understanding' in regard to the role played by the government and from this perspective, if the government fails to perform its duty, i.e. if it fails to ensure people's access to food, it loses its moral legitimacy. From the point of view of the people, they are electing a group of representatives to perform the role of God's 'agent'. If the government fails to do so, it is performing an immoral act and should be held accountable for that.

This particular understanding in regard to the 'moral role of the government' shapes the ideas of the people living in Dhaka and Naogaon about the whole electoral process. In Dhaka, we witnessed the development of an extreme frustration about the political process and elected leaders. People are often sarcastic and as one interviewee points out, 'To the elites, to the political leaders, we are the poor. We don't dress well and we stink. They even don't feel comfortable to stand beside me. However, things change completely during the time of election and all of a sudden, we started smelling really good.'

Consequently, the slum dwellers of Dhaka rarely go to the elected leaders, be it national or local, to push forward their demands, and they have come to a conclusion that these officials will not respond

to their demands. When they talk about the government their focus remains limited to elected officials and they almost never talk about the bureaucrats. The central bureaucratic machinery remains inaccessible to them. Whenever we asked respondents about their experiences in interacting with the government, they talked about elected officials and pointed out the irregularities and corrupt practices that prevail in both the urban slums and the rural villages. As one slum-dweller points out, 'I don't really go to them. The thing is, if I receive any benefit, I always have to give them their cut. For instance, if I apply for a loan of BDT 5,000, this necessarily means that once approved I have to give them BDT 2,000. It is not worth it'. The situation is almost the same in Naogaon. According to a day-labourer, 'Without taking a bribe the chairman and members do not give any VGD or VGF²⁴ card to anyone. Those who can give a bribe are given the government beneficiary card even though they are well off. On the other hand, those who can't give a bribe are informed that the beneficiary list has already been completed. They don't misbehave with anyone but don't do any work without money.'

We found that this has created a dual effect in terms of accountability. On the one hand, the 'immoral' attitude of the government has frustrated respondents and led them to adopt a fatalistic approach. Their perception is that no-one really cares for them and they have remained invisible to the government in terms of achieving their rights. However, in order to cope with this adverse situation, they have developed an individualistic approach which says that since no-one cares for them and no-one will help them, they have to take care of themselves through their own means. As one interview respondent points out, 'The thing is, I gave birth to my sons and daughters, I am responsible for their birth and therefore, it is my responsibility to take care of them. And given that I am taking care of them now, I can expect that they will take care of me when I grow old.' Our study shows that for the poor in Dhaka and Naogaon, their accountability is to themselves. They understand their situation and as a result, they don't try to hold anyone accountable other than themselves.

In Khulna, in contrast, ideas about accountability are somewhat different. Unlike in the other two study areas, respondents in Khulna considered that rights come from the local government. To some extent, they were more politically aware and succeeded in making the case that the constitution has given them certain rights and it is the responsibility of the state to realize these rights. For instance, a fisherman who participated in one of our FGDs argued that, 'The government of the country should fulfil the need of the people, especially those who are poor and hungry. It means that local government will inform the local Member of Parliament (MP), the MP will speak up about it in the Parliament and then the government will initiate the measures to solve the food shortage problem.' Whilst people living in Khulna consider the local government bodies as the source of realizing their rights that does not mean that these rights are being realized. The Chair of the Market Committee made an important point: 'Rights are something that people are entitled to. They must have these things to survive. However, the truth is the rights have transformed into charity. Whenever the local government bodies perform their legitimate role, they act like they are performing a charitable function.' The people of Khulna largely agree that the local government officials show this kind of attitude and they have pointed out that as a consequence, they are often deprived of the basic needs that they are entitled to as a citizen of the country. According to one FGD participant:

'The thing is, the government can do many things for us. For instance, there are many people who are starving and cannot even afford two meals a day. Should not the government provide them with [VGD] cards? In my opinion, probably the national government does that but our Chairman and members do not deliver it to us. We rarely get help from the Union Parishad. Suppose we need BDT 100 and they have only BDT 70. Well, they will not give us the money and all they will do is give us BDT 10 while keeping the rest for themselves. To make the matter worse, we have to bribe them to get this BDT 10.'

In this particular area, people still go to the elected local representatives for their needs and try to lobby them to get access to different government programmes. However, they are now finding out

that their elected representatives are not willing to help them; rather they are trying to satisfy their 'own' people. As one interviewee points out, 'We are trapped in the hands of corrupt local leaders.'

In summary, in all the studied areas, people are frustrated about the role played by the government/local government and are of the opinion that these elected government bodies are not responding to the needs of the people.

Government mechanisms are not performing in an effective and efficient manner in order to realize the goals stipulated by the National Food Policy in any of the study sites. Our respondents have heard that the government is supposed to play an important role and that there are mechanisms in place to monitor the market price, to control price increases, to ensure the right prices for farmers and to ensure access to food for the citizens. But they have not seen these mechanisms or local government authorities in action and they do not believe that the government is playing any effective role in dealing with FPV.

In both the urban and rural areas, people said that they believed that the corrupt and inefficient government representatives should be punished. However, they thought that the officials were not being punished for their actions.

Even though there are some significant similarities, as we have pointed out earlier, the differences are important too. For instance, whereas in Dhaka and Naogaon, the frustration with the role played by the government officials has resulted in complete inertia on the part of the citizens in regard to interacting with the elected officials or about the whole political process, in Khulna, people still believe that the government should and can affect their lives in a positive way. Unlike the other two study areas, they still have a strong belief in the process of electoral accountability and they try to interact with the local elected leaders. In addition to that, whereas the people of Dhaka and Naogaon are showing a tendency to leave everything to fate and have started to concentrate only on their individual ability, that is not the case in Khulna.

This actually raises two important questions. Firstly, why does this variation exist? Secondly, what does this tell us about the broader picture about the accountability for hunger and food security?

We argue that the variation exists for three reasons. In the last two years, Khulna has been subject to a number of government and NGO-led programmes following Cyclone Aila. While conducting these programmes, both the government and the NGOs relied on the elected representatives and efforts were made to help the people living in this area. As a result, people in the area have first-hand experience about what the government can do, how it can perform its functions and what types of changes the government-run programmes can bring about. A certain level of expectation has developed about the role of the government and they know that it is possible for the state to intervene in an effective and efficient manner. This experience of intervention may have played a role in shaping their ideas about the role of the government.

In Dhaka and Naogaon, these kinds of interventions have been largely absent, and people are getting accustomed to a scenario where they are left to manage on their own.

Secondly, our study shows that in slums of Dhaka, the people consider themselves as an invisible entity. Often, they are not allowed to vote in the local elections. As a result, they do not have the power to interact with the local elected representatives, and the only interaction they can have is informal in nature. This explains why they have little expectation from the local leaders. In both Naogaon and Khulna, in contrast, local elections are held at regular intervals. However, in Naogaon, we have seen that the local level leaders do not acknowledge the problems that the rural farmers and day labourers are facing. During our interviews political leaders told us that the situation had improved a lot compared to the last year. According to them almost 99 percent of the people now have regular access to food. Our interviews with the farmers and the day labourers, on the other hand, showed that their condition had not improved at all. It is possible that this mismatch between ideas and reality has

forced the people of this area not to contact their local leaders and that they, like the people of Dhaka, have started to rely on fate.

In contrast, we have found that in Khulna, even though people are unhappy about the role played by the elected leaders, the Union Parishad members admit that the situation has declined and they are failing to help them in an effective and efficient way. Third, in Khulna, NGO intervention has played an important role too. In one of our interviews, the day labourers informed us that they had learned about their rights from NGOs and that these organizations had trained them about their entitlements and how to get them.

It is still too early to draw any conclusion about the broader picture but it can be argued that this lack of accountability and the lack of demand for accountability in Dhaka or Naogaon is not a good sign for healthy democracy. If the people feel that they are not getting what they are entitled to and come to a conclusion that the government will never provide them with basic necessities, there will be no pressure on the government to respond. No pressure, and no response on the part of the government will not lead to a positive outcome for people facing volatile food prices.

ANNEX: THE PARENT PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The research aims to contribute to improving the food security prospects of poor and vulnerable people in developing countries who are exposed to FPV by improving knowledge of how people's lives are affected by it. The key research question it will address is:

How do high and unpredictable food prices affect overall well-being and development in poor or vulnerable communities?

And more specifically:

How does FPV affect the essential day-to-day work of keeping families fed and cared for?

How well do the support systems on which people routinely rely – whether formal or informal – help people cope with sharp changes in food prices?

After four years of investigation, the aim is to arrive at a clear and strong understanding of the mechanisms through which people's well-being is affected by FPV. This strong understanding is intended to apply across clearly defined developing country contexts. To make this possible, the core of the research design is a relatively large and diverse data collection exercise, combining qualitative and quantitative, longitudinal, in-depth topical, and multi-site data collection activities. This plural approach to data collection is necessary given the need for a confident and robust explanation that is capable of being applied to a range of contexts and variables, rather than merely describing the locations where the research has been undertaken.

DEFINITIONS AND MEANINGS

FPV is a situation in which food prices have changed more and faster than usual, in unpredictable ways. For this study, FPV is not only defined by objective variance from price trends but also implies a perception that price changes are unusual, or that, at any given moment, food prices are, and/or are perceived to be:

- suddenly or unusually high, compared to a relevant comparable period in the past;
- suddenly or unusually low, compared to a relevant comparable period in the past;
- unpredictable because they are moving too erratically to track or assess.²⁵

Well-being is 'a state of being with others, which arises when human needs are met, when one can act meaningfully to pursue one's goals, and when one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life'.²⁶ While well-being differs across contexts, this project follows the principles set out by the Well-Being in Developing Countries (WeD) research, which incorporates economic security and material well-being, physical and mental health, education, relational aspects (including social and family relationships as well as those with power and authority), and values and subjective dimensions that determine how quality of life is perceived.²⁷

Care or unpaid care work refers to the housework and care of persons that occurs in homes and communities of all societies, on an unpaid basis. Unpaid care work is usually undertaken by women and girls, goes unmeasured in official statistics, is ignored by public policy, and contributes directly to food and nutrition security. Women's ability to undertake paid work depends on their responsibilities for unpaid care. During economic and food crises, women often spend more time and effort on unpaid care work to cope.²⁸

By trying to understand 'impact', the aim is to provide a strong explanation of why and how FPV changes or contributes to changes in people's well-being through a mechanism-based explanation of impact which draws on analytical sociology and middle-range theory to detail the 'nuts and bolts' of responses to food price changes.²⁹ This provides a practical, rigorous approach to explaining the complex social matters. It means reaching below the global or macro movements of food prices to clarify in a careful, step-by-step way, how those movements change the micro-conditions of people's working, family, and social lives. People respond to changes, and so these responses in turn need to be understood, as do how these responses create further changes in the conditions of people's work, family, and social lives. Finally, the sum of people's actions and interactions in response to FPV need to be assessed for a meaningful understanding of the macro outcomes that FPV triggers or contributes towards. There are a number of conceptual and methodological challenges that need to be grappled with, and the choice of method and overall approach reflects attempts to do so.³⁰ The approach has three main components.

Component 1: National food security and FPV data collection

For the qualitative findings from the 23 research locations to have relevance beyond the communities themselves, and in order to understand the wider context, the qualitative research is situated within the broader context of national FPV and food security more generally. Consequently, data have been collated and synthesized pertaining to various elements of national food systems.

A simple traffic-light classification provides an at-a-glance indication of how countries are faring. The schema (although not the classification) is adapted from FAO's newly extended suite of indicators that were launched with *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012* report.³¹ This provides a broad food-systems approach that is important given that food security outcomes result from many complex interactions across and beyond the food system. Food security outcomes include availability of food for consumption, including amount, type, and quality; the ability to access the required type, quality, and quantity of food in terms of affordability, adequacy of allocation mechanisms, and meeting social and other preferences; and utilization, or the ability to benefit from consumed food, which is dependent on the nutritional content, the social value, and the safety of available and affordable food. These three elements are considered in terms of both determinants and outcomes (although not all here have an indicator on both sides). The choice of indicators is primarily determined by the availability of relevant data comparable between countries. In each case data availability and frequency determine the extent to which meaningful insights and comparisons can be drawn. Given that stability over time is an important determinant of food security, measures of vulnerability to food insecurity

are also included, as well as time-series data for food staples in domestic markets. The markets presented are those closest to the research communities that are included in the databases of either FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) or the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).

Component 2: Community case studies

In each of the 23 qualitative research sites, we are gathering evidence to compile a qualitative community case study. In each country, one urban or peri-urban location was selected, as was at least one rural food-producing site. Eight sites have been part of ongoing crisis impact monitoring research since 2009, and in those, exposure to the global economy was also a selection factor. Research teams were encouraged to select sites in which they had prior research and/or programme experience in order to build on existing relationships. The sites contain a mix of well-off, low-income, and extremely poor people. Household case study respondents were mainly drawn from low and very low-income households, and in all sites they encompass some of the very poorest, as well as people who are vulnerable for other reasons, including that they are elderly, disabled, orphaned, or female-headed households.

Each community case study includes background and context data collection, where possible from documentary sources; ten or more household case studies in each site, which will be built up through interviews with different household members over the four years; focus group discussions (FGDs) with four or more occupational and/or relevant social groups in each community, including, for example, agricultural wage workers, petty or large traders, young people, and transport workers, to build a picture of economic change within the communities, how different occupation groups are experiencing FPV, and the different sources of support that are available; key informant interviews with local administrative officials, NGO staff, religious or community leaders, local business people, and politicians; and local price data collection through visits to markets.

The community case studies were developed to fit the local contexts, capacities, and traditions of the researchers undertaking the research. While guidelines are shared among all the teams, the researchers adapt these to their own situations and experiences as necessary. All, however, address the same research questions, and a great deal of the data generated can be subjected to direct comparative analysis across the sites.

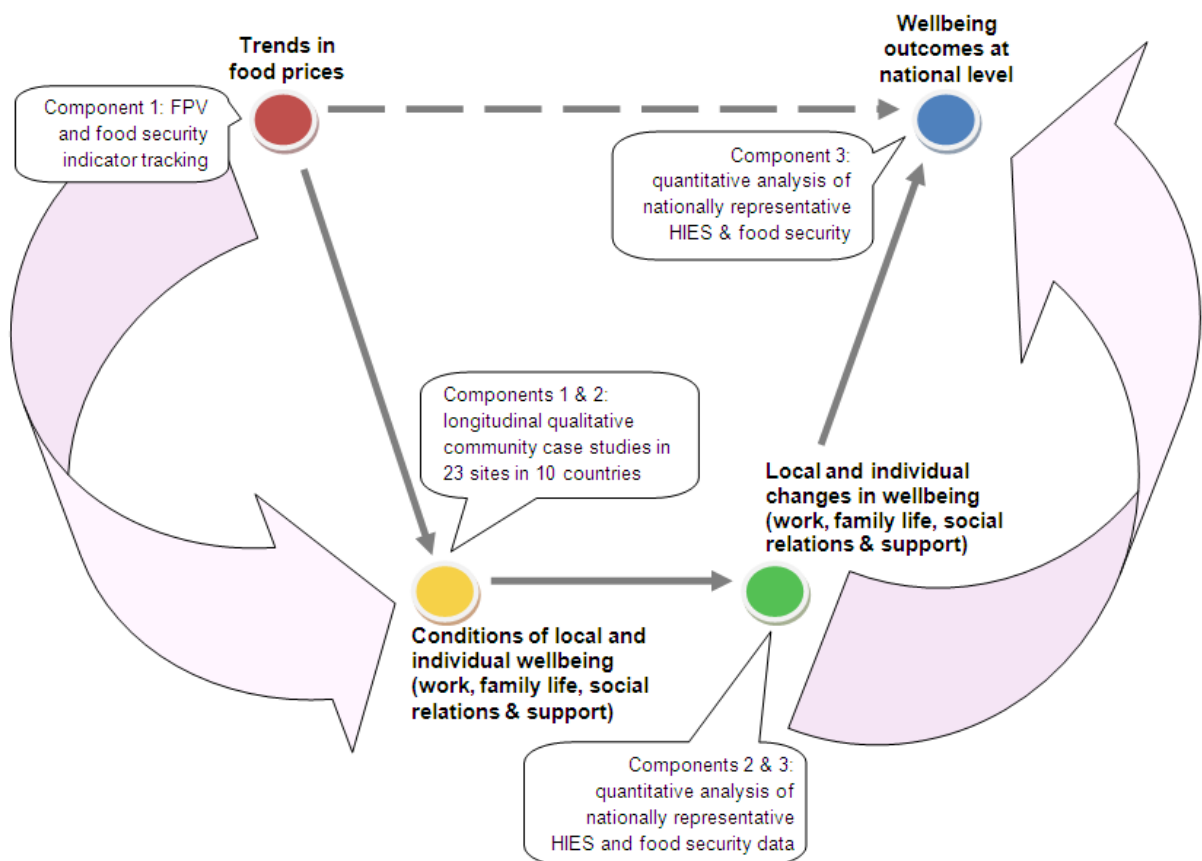
Around 400 household case studies and key informant interviews are undertaken in each annual research round as well as 100 focus group discussions and further local data collection activities. Around 1,500 people participate in the research each year.

The qualitative data are transcribed or written up and translated in each country. This represents a major task, particularly given that the research is being conducted in 15 languages across the 10 countries. Data management is being coordinated across the countries, with common metadata labels issued to all the teams and the lead country researchers responsible for ensuring data are transcribed, translated, and labelled correctly. For the synthesis, the translated qualitative data have been stored and coded in the data analysis software, NVivo 10, with which it will be possible to make comparative analyses over the four years and to classify respondents. Given the high costs of collecting, transcribing, translating, storing, and coding qualitative data, the emphasis has been on small amounts of high-quality data and on maximizing such alternative secondary sources that exist.

Component 3: Integrated qualitative–quantitative analysis

In order to further situate the qualitative research in each country, the specific context needs to be integrated and triangulated by analysing existing household income and expenditure and food security data from at least two points in time. The so-called ‘Q2’, or qualitative–quantitative analysis, allows the wealth of the qualitative data to be embedded within a complementary quantitative framework that is nationally representative and which can test the stress of the qualitative findings. The quantitative analysis provides a broad national picture of the impacts of volatility on food security over the research period, and provides a sense of the representativeness and scale of the qualitative research findings. This quantitative analysis relies on existing national survey data, such as Living Standard Measurement Surveys, among others, and is only possible in countries where suitable data are accessible for at least two points in time. While the exact nature of the Q2 process varies between countries for the above reasons, the ambition in each case is that the process is an iterative one whereby the qualitative research informs lines of quantitative enquiry, whose findings in turn suggest issues to probe in future rounds of qualitative work. Whereas the qualitative fieldwork is being conducted annually throughout the project period, these complementary quantitative analyses will be undertaken once, or at the most twice, throughout the project according to the frequency with which the national datasets on which they are reliant are published. Figure 3 shows how the different research components are intended to feed into the analytical process.

Figure 3 The research components



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NOTES

- 1 Ivanic et al. (2011).
- 2 See Espey, Harper, and Jones (2010), Elson (2010) and Heltberg et al. (2012).
- 3 See Ashrafee and Noor (2013).
- 4 *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility* is a four-year collective research effort that attempts to explore the effects of change in food prices in the lives of the marginal poor. 'Bangladesh Food Price Report 2012: Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility, Year 1 results' published in 2013 as the first report of this collaborative effort. Since 2008, the food, fuel and financial crises throughout the world have caused enormous suffering to people living in poverty in managing a decent living. In Bangladesh, in collaboration with IDS and BRAC Development Institute of BRAC University, a team of researchers have been involved in a small-scale qualitative study in typical poor urban and rural communities of Bangladesh since 2009.
- 5 The administration of Bangladesh is divided into seven major regions called divisions. The divisions of the country are divided into 64 districts, or zila. The districts are further subdivided into 493 sub-districts or towns, or upazila. Union Councils (or Union Parishads or Unions) are the smallest rural administrative and local government units in Bangladesh
- 6 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2001).
- 7 See Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (2006) : 3.
- 8 International Food Policy Research Institute (2005): 35.
- 9 See Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (2006): 2
- 10 Hossain and Deb (2010).
- 11 World food prices increased dramatically in 2007 and the first and second quarter of 2008 creating a global crisis and causing political and economic instability and social unrest in both developing and developed countries. In 2007 in Bangladesh, 10,000 workers burst out nearby Dhaka, smashed vehicles and vandalised factories in reaction to high food prices with low wages. Dozens of people, including at least 20 police officials, were injured in the violence.
- 12 In Bangladeshi currency, 1 lac = 1,00,000.
- 13 Public Food Grain Distribution System (PFDS) comprises of several programmes including Essential Priority (EP), Other Priority (OP), Large Employee Industries (LEI), Flour Mills (FM), Open Market Sales (OMS) and Fair Price Card (FPC).
- 14 Abraham Maslow's model is based on a need-based approach. In his seminal work, *A Theory of Human Motivations* (1943), Maslow stated that human needs can be represented in a hierarchical way, where the most fundamental level of needs will be at the bottom and the need for self-actualization will be at the top. As per his model, the primary-level need of every human being is the physical need, also known as physiological needs. At this stage, human beings are concerned about their basic survival and concentrate on their need for food, water, etc. When these basic-level needs are fulfilled, human beings then move towards the next stage, i.e. they try to fulfil their safety needs, which include security of body, resources, property, etc. At the third level, people focus more on their emotional needs and try to develop a sense of belonging. The fourth level is the level of self-esteem, where people place more emphasis on respect from others. The final level is the highest one, also known as self-actualization.
- 15 IDS and Oxfam (2013): 24.
- 16 During field work for this study, slum dwellers pointed out a number of reasons for the absence of an eviction threat. Firstly, according to a member of the Slum Resettlement Savings Committee, in general, the threat of eviction surfaces during the transition from one government to another, and there was no political transition during the last few years. Secondly, since 2003, different human rights organizations have raised their voices about slum evictions. Thirdly, in another study conducted by the IGS (2011), it has been pointed out that in most cases, these slums are controlled by the leaders of the ruling political party and the slum-dwellers are often engaged in a 'patron-client' relationship with these leaders where their 'tenure security' is ensured through their participation in different political rallies and meetings. It can be assumed that in our study site, all of these factors have played a role in mitigating the threat of eviction faced by the slum-dwellers. This has a major impact on their lives as shown during our interviews.
- 17 'Helper' is the lowest grade position in garment factory work. In general they join as unskilled labourers with minimal or no education. Their main task is to assist the sewing machine operators.
- 18 This position is designated for persons at garment factory who operates sewing machine.
- 19 Beef head is sold at a different price than that of other cuts of the same animal.
- 20 Sellers load a 7–8 feet long small boat with firewood until it starts sinking. This amount is sold at a rate per boat.

- 21 Maund is a traditional unit of mass used in the Asian Subcontinent. One maund is equivalent to 37.3242 kg.
- 22 The wood from native trees (e.g. Sundori, Goran, Kewra etc.) of Sundarbans forest is termed as forest wood. People plant an exotic species named Shirish tree for commercial purposes. The wood of this tree is known as shirish wood.
- 23 http://www.dgfood.gov.bd/document/ach_file/43123657905%20years%20Achivement-Nikosh-14-11-13.pdf
- 24 Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) are two social safety net programmes run by the Government of Bangladesh in order to support extreme poor and vulnerable people. The card holders are considered as the beneficiaries under the programs.
- 25 Understanding of FPV draws on but is not limited to the following: Anderson, Ivanic, and Martin (2012), Clapp (2009), FAO (2011), Gilbert and Morgan (2010), Naylor and Falcon (2010), and von Braun and Tadesse (2012a and 2012b).
- 26 Camfield and McGregor (2009).
- 27 Understanding of well-being draws principally on the work of the WeD Research Group, particularly McGregor, Camfield, and Woodcock (2009), and White (2009).
- 28 The definition is from Budlender (2008). See also Razavi (2007). For a good summary of the main arguments about why unpaid care work matters in developing countries, see Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) 'Quick Guide to What and How: Unpaid Care Work', <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/47565971.pdf> (last accessed 18 March 2013). On the invisibility of unpaid care work in public policy, see Eyben (2012) and Eyben and Fontana (2011). On the importance of care for nutrition security, see Engle, Menon, and Haddad, (1997). For recent accounts of how unpaid care absorbs the costs of crisis, see Elson (2010), Espey, Harper, and Jones (2010), and Rai, Hoskyns, and Thomas (2010).
- 29 This field has grown fast in recent years, but the main insights are from: Demeulenaere (2011), Gross (2009), Hedström and Bearman (2009), Hedström and Ylikoski (2010), and Machamer, Darden, and Craver (2000). Additionally, White and Phillips (2012) provide an invaluable explanation of how mechanism-based explanations can contribute to better impact evaluation in development.
- 30 The many possible causal factors affecting a multidimensional state like well-being make it difficult to assign attribution (impacts on income are easier to isolate and test with rigour). There is a high risk of researcher bias: studying the effects of FPV can lead one to see volatile food prices as explaining all aspects of change in well-being; see White and Phillips (2012). There is also the risk that the analysis gives too much weight to popular complaints about high prices to explain changes that people dislike. And the indirect or 'second-order of feedback loop' effects of FPV on people's lives may not be captured, so that important influences on long-term well-being are unaccounted for. These could include, for example, shortfalls in public spending to accommodate more costly food subsidies, or clampdowns on popular movements stemming from fears of food riots. People are now used to thinking about high and volatile prices, and behave and believe accordingly. In other words, there is no pristine, pre-impact experimental baseline environment, but a situation of messy real lives complicated by – among many other things – sudden and unexpected food price changes. Against such a backdrop it makes no sense to try to hold other things constant or to assume away complications. Instead, it is important to look at how those complications and multiple other factors may materially interact with the variables of interest – food prices and well-being – given that this is how things work in reality (Gross 2009).
- 31 FAO (2012).

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