

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Thursday, 27 May 2021 10:00 GMT +06:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Fourth Sub-National Dialogue in Bandarban
CONVENED BY	Khaja Abdul Hannan
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/25583/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Member State
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Bangladesh

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

73

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

55 Male

18 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

Nutrition

National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

The Dialogue was organized to solicit inputs and insights for the Food Systems Summit through gaining an understanding about the district itself, challenges its inhabitants regularly face as one of the districts in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), and how its several aspects and existing challenges are affecting the pathways to food system transformation, along with challenges that are contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Dialogue brought a diversity of stakeholders from the Government Departments, Semi-autonomous and autonomous organizations, Private Sector Organisations, Business networks, Civil Society Organisations, and Grass Root level Representatives – working across the food system from production to consumption.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The dialogue reflected most aspects of the Principles including Act with Urgency, Commit to the Summit, Be Respectful, Recognize Complexity and innovation to solution, Embrace Multi-stakeholder Inclusivity. The Dialogue demonstrates the urgency and the commitment of the state. In terms of Being Respectful, the four working groups (titling: Availability of diversified, safe, and nutritious food, Transformation, delivery, access, and role of the private sector, Consumer behavior, nutrition, and food safety and Climate vulnerability, inclusion, and governance) facilitated during the 4th Sub-National Dialogue focused on nutritious and safe food, with a broad lens ranging from production to consumption (seed to the stomach) as well as vulnerabilities and inclusion. As a result, the linkages with other tracks were also discussed and covered during the working group facilitation. The respected guests of the Sub-national Dialogue addressed mass awareness and accountability of all levels to be key areas for improvement in terms of ensuring safe and nutritious food. In Recognising the hill tracts based on ethnicity and multi-stakeholder Inclusivity, Government Departments, Semi-autonomous and Autonomous Organisations, Private Sector Organisations, Business networks, Civil Society Organisations, and Grass Root level Representatives highlighted the significance of working coordination as well as make people aware of what they consume and how the food can be safe. In addition, imperfect Supply chain, gradually decreasing agricultural land and at mass level, the habit of fast-food intake, climate change effects were some other areas highlighted as a few of the challenges in the way of ensuring safe food consumption. Participants emphasized the importance of mass level awareness range from duty bearers to consumers as the prime measure to reduce food unsafety. Alongside, being accountable and responsible from own side as a citizen would be highly appreciated and should be in practice, promoting climate-resilient agriculture, developing more inter-departmental coordination.

DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

The importance of the participatory approach in capturing the voice of a large majority. It is also important to ensure that regional nuances and challenges facing vulnerable groups are captured. With planning, the district administration managed the event on the virtual platform very nicely, which itself is sometimes challenging, considering the remote geographical location and related network connectivity issues. But, it would be better if the challenges and recommendations were more focused. Bandarban dialogue had a series of challenges identified and a way forward to solve them, but most are generic in nature.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

DID YOU USE THE SAME METHOD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONVENORS REFERENCE MANUAL?

Yes

No

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

Bandarban is a district in South-Eastern Bangladesh and a part of the Chittagong Division. One of the three hill districts of Bangladesh and a part of the Chittagong or Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT), Spanning 4,479 km², it is not only the remotest district of the country but also the least populated with a population of 4,04,093 comprising 1,79,400 from ethnic communities (48%) and 2,24,693 Bengali people. The district headquarters, Bandarban town is the only unit that approaches anything near a city. The rest of the area is divided into 7 Upazilas, which are in turn divided into varying numbers of unions. Each union is a cluster of paras and villages. There are more than fifteen ethnic minorities living in the district besides the Bengalis, including the Bomong, Marma, Tanchangya, Tripura, Lushei, Khumi, Chak, Chakma, Rakhine or Arakanese, Riyang, and Pankho. Most of the people of this district especially ethnic people are self-dependent, producing and making their own food. Districts of CHT chiefly produce rice, cotton, tobacco, maize, potato, sugarcane, turmeric, and ginger and are famous for vegetable and fruit production (mango, pineapple, banana, papaya, jackfruit, orange, lychee, guava, and lemon). Rice and other agricultural products are also sufficient enough to fulfill their own requirements and transport them to other districts. Communities in the region are increasingly experiencing the impacts of environmental and climate change-related problems on their lives and livelihoods, with deforestation, landslide, seasonal water scarcity (dry season), soil erosion, degrading soil fertility due to soil erosion, and flash floods becoming common phenomena causing devastation. Traditionally indigenous communities practice jhum cultivation, a local form of 'shifting' or 'rotational' slash and burn cultivation. However, harmful and unsustainable agricultural practices such as rotation of shifting cultivation in very short intervals, tuber crops cultivation without mulching, tobacco cultivation, use of firewood in tobacco processing kilns, and depletion of natural forests due to frequent clearing of natural vegetation for jhum cultivation are leading to gradual degradation of soil and forests. Although the size of the population is less than 300,000 in this district, it seriously lacks basic health facilities and results in underweight, scarcity of safe drinking water, and malnutrition.

Boro-fallow-T. Aman, fallow-fallow-T. Aman, fallow-Aus+non-rice (jhum), and vegetable-fallow-fallow are the major cropping patterns in CHT, which cover more than 40% of the net cropped area. About 30% area is covered by annual crops, chiefly fruits like banana, pineapple, and papaya and, spices like ginger and turmeric. Percentages of single-cropped area and double-cropped have been found to be 33.29 and 32.10 of the net cropped area in the region. The cropping intensity of the CHT is much lower than the national average.

Initiatives are required to be taken to increase the productivity of exclusively rice-based cropping patterns. Cultivation of short duration high yield potential Aus rice varieties, suitable for jhum, along with other species of crops for mixed and relay cropping with improved production practices are needed to be adopted to increase productivity. Multi-strata fruit orchards (MSFO) and complex fruit and timber-based mixed agroforest (SALT-2) can be promoted to maintain agricultural production and environmental gradient. Agro-forestry, watershed-based production unit, multi-layered home garden, contour planting, papaya/flower cultivation in jhum, community forest management, seepage water harvesting can be the potential technologies to be adopted and expanded by the hill dwellers for sustainable livelihood. The Upazilas having a higher cropping pattern index can be studied in-depth to extrapolate potential cropping patterns to other Upazilas with similar environments. Further studies are required to better utilize the single and double-cropped areas and to diversify cropping patterns through the inclusion of new crops or crop varieties.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- ✓ Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- ✓ Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- ✓ Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| ✓ Finance | ✓ Policy |
| ✓ Innovation | ✓ Data & Evidence |
| ✓ Human rights | ✓ Governance |
| ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment | Trade-offs |
| | ✓ Environment and Climate |

MAIN FINDINGS

Bandarban is having health and sanitation-related facilities and services by the government but more attention is required both for infrastructure and staffing for wider coverage of the hilly district. The more remote areas are often lacking in services, forcing people to travel long distances for basic medical care. Also, the water crisis is another significant one people face here. When the water level downs in the dry season, people in remote areas of the district face extreme water crises. Access to clean water and latrines remains a serious problem; intestinal infections are an ongoing concern. Although govt. has undertaken various measures focusing on those issues it needs to be strengthened. WASH and sanitation program needs to be expedited considering the local contexts.

Market access is limited because of poor road and transportation systems. There are severe food shortages during the lean season. Additionally, although CHT (Rangamati, Khagrachari, Bandarban) holds only one percent of the country's population only, alarmingly more than two-thirds of Bangladesh's malaria cases occur in this region.

Bandarban has a good number of unused lands which can be utilized for cultivation. Bringing those uncultivated land under agricultural activities or interventions will have a positive impact on food production and food security of the area. Along with that, preventing deforestation, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and taking conservation measures to prevent hill razing, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss will be helpful to ensure a sustainable food system. Burning down natural vegetation for jhum cultivation should be stopped. Sustainable jhum cultivation or alternates should be promoted to allow natural vegetation to replenish, for example, tree-based land use through agroforestry and fruit farming. Tobacco cultivation should also be made limited as it consumes extra nutrients from the soil, reduces soil nutrients more rapidly than many other food crops, and wears away soil fertility. Besides, tobacco requires a huge amount of fertilizer and chemical inputs that affect soil adversely. As a result, cultivating other crops on the same land does not bring expected yield. Govt. has undertaken measures to reduce tobacco cultivation across the country which needs to be expedited in the hilly districts. Setting up storage facilities and engaging the private sector will help to reduce food loss in the post-harvest period.

Bandarban has several remote areas where income generating activities are limited which induce the poverty level high. Apart from promoting the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices, those who are extremely poor, vulnerable indigenous groups, and farmers should be supported by government subsidies and different social safety nets applicable for those specific areas.

Officials responsible for the quality of agricultural products, manufactured products, and market surveillance must be made accountable for their role in promoting safe and nutritious food consumption among the general population. Everyone should be aware of and get pertinent information, which they can put to use. While the country has been declared to be food secure, it is necessary to focus on the nutritional value of food ingested by people on a daily basis, especially by people living in remote and vulnerable pockets like hill tracts, coastal, char and haor lands. These areas should be brought under close monitoring to ensure: affordability and accessibility to safe and nutritious food in local markets; food relief to people in hard-to-reach areas during any natural disaster; income-generating opportunities during the lean period etc. A number of awareness-increasing initiatives should be undertaken, such as seminars, symposiums, campaigns, and media involvement, that focus on different challenges as well as nutrition, sanitation and hygiene practices. People from government, NGOs, academia, private sector, grassroots, civil society have to come together. Capacity building and awareness training may be delivered to private business engaged in food sector, as well as hotel business cooperatives.

Motivational as well as capacity building training should be arranged for youth in particular, to involve them in agriculture.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC

- Availability of diversified, safe, and nutritious food:

Challenges: Inadequate irrigation facilities due to unavailability of water; Degradation of soil quality due to jhum/shifting cultivation; Lack of capital for farm operation; Insufficient quality seed supply; - Transportation issues due to rough terrain-topographic limitation; Inadequate facilities for horticulture food production; Lack of preservation facilities for perishable food items; tobacco cultivation reduces agri-lands.

Way Forward:

Tobacco cultivation should be stopped; Social safety nets program for the farmers need to be strengthened; Promoting sustainable agricultural activities; Burning of natural vegetation and deforestation has to be restricted to combat the challenge of climate change; Marketing facilities should be established in different points so that farmers should get accurate/fair price for their crop; Promotion of awareness on nutritious food consumption through an app.

- Transformation, delivery, access and role of private sector:

Challenges:

Reducing post-harvest loss of agricultural production; Importance of value chain development and market linkages; Lack of adequate commodity selling points for farmers; Lack of awareness among communities regarding the nutritional value of different crops/food

Way Forward:

- It is essential to establish an adequate number of cold storage/warehouses for proper storage of perishable food items; By ensuring diversified use of agricultural commodities which can be enabled by establishing location-specific agro-processing industries. e.g., tea, pineapple processing plants; Establish value-added food processing firms; Value added food processing units should be established to improve the quality of processed foods; Commodity selling points should be launched to reduce transportation costs for farmers living in remote corners of the district; Establishing a viable transportation system to collect and transport agricultural products from farmers,

- Consumer behavior, nutrition, and food safety

Challenges:

Lack of information on the importance of consuming nutritional foods; Inability to afford healthy foods as a result of poverty; Facing challenges in maintaining food safety throughout production, marketing and storage, maintaining temperature while transporting the foods etc.; Lack of knowledge about safe food or parameters of food safety; Health concerns because of lack of balanced nutrition; Lack of nutritious food and iron-folic acid intake among pregnant women due to social taboo and poverty; Lack of WASH program; Prevalence of water-borne diseases; Lack of hygiene knowledge among tribal communities

Way Forward:

- Nutrition education should be provided to all communities especially women and children; Awareness should be increased regarding food safety issues and the Safe Food Act enforced; Create nutrition awareness and promote dietary diversity; Identify a leader from each community to be trained on food safety aspects and nutritious food consumption; Awareness program regarding WASH practices; Improve access to safe drinking water.

- Climate vulnerability, inclusion, and governance

Challenges:

- Unpredictable Climate Change damages the environment, soil and other geographical aspects and abrupt burning of Jhum fields have a direct connection with this damage. Forest conservation is very poor and unplanned deforestation has increased challenges. Lack of processing industries, inadequate transportation system; Sudden landslides during monsoon period result in a very high number of casualties; Remote Upazilas do not have an adequate water supply. Drinking contaminated water makes them vulnerable to different water-borne diseases.

Way forward:

- Build agricultural production zone in high altitude lands; Promote sustainable jhum cultivation practices following GAP; Emphasize on producing crops and fruits which are in high demand; Increase participation of women in awareness generation on nutritious food consumption, and eco-friendly crop cultivation; Illegal hill cutting should be stopped to prevent landslide; Deep tube-wells have to be installed to ensure safe drinking water.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There were no areas of divergence among participants. There were in fact areas of convergence with similar issues being flagged in different groups, highlighting consensus on the core challenges and the need to address them.

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