



**INWASCON**

ISSN: 2710-5873 (Online)

CODEN: ITMNBH



**SHORT COMMUNICATION**

**FOOD SECURITY SITUATION IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS, BANGLADESH**

Feroj Foysal Ahummed

Freelance Development Consultant, Bangladesh

\*Corresponding Author Email: [foysal.f@gmail.com](mailto:foysal.f@gmail.com)

This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**ARTICLE DETAILS**

**Article History:**

Received 12 February 2025

Revised 02 March 2025

Accepted 16 March 2025

Available online 15 April 2025

**ABSTRACT**

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) located in the south east of Bangladesh consists of three districts: Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati. The region is home of 11 different ethnic groups in addition to the Bengali inhabitants, and has a population of over 1.6 million (1 percent of the national population). Each ethnic group retains a distinct language, culture, tradition, and justice system. The CHT is geographically distinct from most parts of plain land Bangladesh, characterized by very steep, rugged mountainous terrain and dense jungle in areas. Poverty, land and population pressure, water scarcity, remoteness, poor service delivery, weak market linkages and pressure over natural resources are big challenges for development amongst CHT people. This article is prepared to provide a snapshot on the food security situation in CHT.

**1. FOOD SECURITY SITUATION IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS, BANGLADESH**

Food security" exists, when people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy life. Few studies yet been conducted to roll out as a whole the food security situation in CHT. Most organizations conducted studies in essence to job objectives and partial representation of CHT communities which fail to comply as whole the food security situation in CHT. However, in compliance with different studies and reports this brief note has been prepared to create an overview of food security situation in CHT.

Food insecurity in the CHT is widespread. Harsh environment, inaccessibility of few areas, poor service delivery, primitive practices, inadequate quality inputs and weak market linkages have had been causing low agricultural productions, overwhelming food insecurity situation in CHT. The majority of the people in CHT depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, with much of it being subsistence-oriented and focused on the traditional technique of a shifting cultivation called jum. Other major livelihood options include wage labor, small business, fishing, minor forest product harvesting, and handicraft manufacturing. Land tenure and customary propriety rights are often guided by oral tradition, informal institutions and customs in CHT.

About 49.4 percent of households in CHT suffer from food insecurity for periods generally starts from the month March and continue till August of the year – with the period typically between March and June been the worst time (Household Survey in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Human Development Resource Center, 2013). CHT farm families pass around 2.7 months of food deficit, leads to hungry season which eventually affect to their poor health and malnutrition (Household Survey in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Human Development Resource Center, 2013). There are average of 17.8 days in a year of food deficiency is prevalent in this region. In term of calorie intake, per capita per day food consumption recorded as 1949 Kcal (AFSP II Baseline Survey, Sustainable Development Associate, 2014-2015) which is significantly lower than the national average of 2238.5 Kcal/capita/day (BBS, 2007) (Household Survey in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Human

Development Resource Center, 2013). Overlapping with the monsoon season and the pre-harvest season for jum rice, these months register the highest rates of food insecurity, as households run out of food stocks from the previous year yield, and have limited opportunities for other types of productive activity. One of the reasons for food deficit is the declining productivity of jum cultivation and limited land for cultivation combined with continuous migration from the plains. Sometime Jum crops also get damaged due to natural or manmade disasters such as; heavy or no rain fall, wild boar attack etc for which the Jum farmers face severe food crisis in remote places. Those families have to survive only eating wild potatoes until GOB-NGO aid reach there which is also insufficient sometime. As coping strategy during food deficiency days, farmers eat smaller meals even sometime reduce the frequency, depends on starvation including and even overlooks food quality, sales livestock, take children out of schools, migrate to other villages for works for few weeks, expense savings and borrow money from close hand sources.

Degree of vulnerability due to food insecurity varies from location to location apart from seasons amongst the CHT communities. If we look back a decade 68 percent farmers were jum dependent whilst it reduces to 17 percent, shows in recent studies due to decrease at amount of jum land. Chaitra (Mar-Apr), Baishak (Apr-May) and Ashar (June-July) is the most food deficiency month in CHT and such an example 64.1% farmers of Bandarban suffer more in the month Chaitra (Study on Agricultural Production Practices in Chittagong Hill Tracts by HDRC, 2016). 79.47 percent households are severely food insecured at Sajek union of Baghaichari Upazilla of Rangamati (Food Security Assessment at Sajek Union of CHT, Medecins Sans Frontiers Artsen Zonder Grenzen, 2008). Natural resources including forests have been degrading day by day, which also being contributing to food insecurity especially amongst ethnic people.

Poverty in CHT remains prevalent, despite significant progress in Bangladesh. Over 60 percent of the CHT households live in absolute poverty (twice the rate in Bangladesh) and one quarter of the population is hard-core poor (Absolute poverty is defined in terms of a minimum daily dietary requirement of 2122 kilocalorie and hardcore poverty at 1805 kilocalorie; Household Survey in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Human Development Resource Center, 2013). The poverty status of women in the CHT is of even greater concern, as almost all women in CHT (94 percent)

live below the absolute poverty line and about 85 percent fall below the threshold of the hard-core poor. The lack of income generating opportunities in the region has been the major cause of the poverty, with a direct and detrimental impact on the nutrition and health status of the people, and on the education of children. More than one fifth of the household members (20-25 percent) in the CHT, regardless of location, are unemployed (far higher than the average for the rest of Bangladesh - 4.5 percent).

#### REFERENCE

Absolute poverty is defined in terms of a minimum daily dietary

requirement of 2122 kilocalorie and hardcore poverty at 1805 kilocalorie

AFSP II Baseline Survey, Sustainable Development Associate, 2014-2015.

Food Security Assessment at Sajek Union of Cht, Medecins Sans Frontiers Artsen Zonder Grenzen, 2008

Household Survey in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Human Development Resource Center, 2013

Study on Agricultural Production Practices in Chittagong Hill Tracts by HDRC, 2016

