

# Food Security

## 1. Background and Scope

### 1.1 Food Security Status

Safe food in culturally acceptable form has been the first basic human right. Despite with the global climate change impacts, price hike and the concern to realize food as human right, the situation is not as desired. People all over the world are plunging into the vicious cycle of hunger and malnutrition. Still the fact is that about 1000 million people are facing hunger and malnutrition against 850 million in 1990s, out of which 880 million of them are living in developing countries; 76 % of whom live in rural areas ( FAO 2008c). Therefore, the challenge that lies ahead of all stakeholders including civil society, activists and development partners is to find a solution to turn this world into a hunger free world. Our common endeavor and strong commitment can serve the purpose better.

Nepal is classified as a least-developed country and ranks 142 out of 177 in UNDP's *Human Development Report 2009*. An estimated 31% of the population lives below the national poverty line and 24% live with less than \$1 a day. Poverty is worsening in mountainous areas and 13 out of 16 mountain districts and 21 out of 39 hill districts are food-deficient. Agriculture represents the largest sector of the Nepalese economy and contributes 82% of exports. However, agricultural production has been in relative decline since the 1980s and the share of agriculture in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has fallen from 66% to 38% during the last 20 years.

The factor of food insecurity in Nepal is basically related with access to production resources, limited economic opportunities, appropriate technology and socio-political situation. Hunger and Malnutrition today in Nepal are not caused by the shortage or scarcity of food only but it is the matter of food access, adequate income, and access on the production resources that allow people either to produce or to buy enough food. Food Sovereignty a future with out hunger is a precondition to genuine food security and the right to food is a tool to achieve it. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Looking to those international and national contexts of hunger and malnutrition, there is a increasing need of food security intervention in Nepal particularly addressing to those social, economic and technological improvement based on the geographical landscape, available resources and global climate change impact on it. The application of the universal principles of permaculture design to agriculture contributes to achieve a sustainable food security in Nepal. Nepalese traditional agro-livestock farming has good features of agro-ecology, environmentally sound but there is a need of additional inputs for creating economic opportunity on it. A scientific design of those traditional farms and balancing the agro-ecological components contribute to economic viability and a sustainable food security.

### 1.2 The Problems

Hunger and malnutrition in Nepal is in the alarming rate with a Global Hunger Index (GHI) of 26.6. The GHI score ranks Nepal on 57<sup>th</sup> out of 88. At the national level the percentage of population below poverty line is estimated as 31 % has been reduced from 42 % in 1990. The human poverty index is the highest in the mountains followed by the hills. Likewise hunger in the mountains and hills are more prevalence where the food production is below the required level. Similarly hunger remains among the indigenous hill tribal groups, some agricultural laborers and share –croppers living in Terai and hills. The magnitude and depth of poverty varies across the region, the highest in the more remote rural areas particularly to the mid-western and far-western hills where limited access to development infrastructure. Natural disaster particularly the heavy monsoon and long drought in summer has severely damage crop production. The vulnerability assessment and monitoring (VAM) report of WFP in 2007 indicated that Nepal faced a 132,000 tones food grains shortage for 2006-2007 compared to a deficit of just 23,000 in the previous year<sup>1</sup>. In 2009 the current estimate of number of food insecure people in Nepal who needs food assistance was 3.7million, represents approximately 16.4 % of the total population.<sup>2</sup>

The condition of women and children is worse in terms of economy, social rights and other livelihood aspects. It is estimated that about 46 percent children suffer from malnutrition. Thousands of infants are born with low weight, which attributed to the undernourishment of the pregnant mothers. Looking to the gender development index and gender empowerment index of Nepal are 0.391 and 0.452 respectively. Most of the women are engaged in informal, subsistence domestic wage earning and care taking jobs. In the non-economic activities at home, their labour participation is 25.1 hours and 9.7 hours of man in a week. There is an additional work in farming activities, women involvement in farming is about 65 %. However the most vulnerable and food

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<sup>1</sup> WFP Food Security Bulletin-2007

<sup>2</sup> Cost of Coping WFP 2009

insecure groups are women bound with a lot of traditions and beliefs. Therefore, the level of women empowerment to control over food and food producing resources in Nepal is really a challenge.

Based on the findings of various studies the key problems causing food insecurity in Nepal are low production having a subsistence farming, limited off-farm income opportunities, ineffective agriculture extension services, limited infrastructures, the policy of land management ,distribution and tenure, limited agricultural credit facilities, food management and utilization pattern at household level. The traditions and customs are bound with culture significantly contribute to food insecurity, the policies reflecting to the quality and production has bigger implications on the over all agriculture production.

### **1.3 Rationale**

One of Nepal's major development objectives is to reduce poverty. The ninth plan (1999-2002) for the first time defined the long-term (20 year) targets for poverty alleviation; the percentage of population below national poverty line by 2015 is expected to be 21. The tenth plan has clearly outlines a 'four pillars' poverty reduction strategy including broad-based economic growth, social sector development, targeted programmes and social inclusions and good governance. To achieve high broad based economic growth, greater productivity in agricultural sector along with non-agricultural sector, tourism and export has been prioritized. The interim constitution has also been emphasized on food sovereignty ensuring the right to food for all. To achieve this national goal, NPG also realized the need and scope of food security in it's programme. The food security interventions are particularly linked with basic principles of Permaculture design including the promotion of organic and sustainable agriculture in target communities.

### **1.4 Expected outcomes**

Based on the current context of food security situation in Nepal, NPG expect the following outcomes through the interventions of food security programmes within the partnership framework and network members.

- 1.4.1 Comprehensive food security programmes have been implemented contributing to reduce the problems of hunger and malnutrition in target community.
- 1.4.2 Appropriate production technologies based on the Permaculture principles have been identified and disseminated to increase food security of the target beneficiaries.
- 1.4.3 Selected policies on agriculture, climate change and sustainable agriculture have been monitored and influenced to realize right to food in Nepal.

## **2. Purpose**

*The partner organizations and network members of NPG are strengthen and supported to develop and implement interventions which increase the food security of households in target communities.*

## **3. Approaches**

NPG will focus the following approaches to address its goal to achieve sustainable food security in its target areas:

1. Partnership with communities to respond national and local concerns and needs in food security and right to food.
2. Develop community skills, self-reliance and the mechanisms for sustaining the development of their own through capacity building, empowerment and institutional development in the target community.
3. Awareness rising through social analysis, information sharing, advocacy, campaign, demonstration, and non-formal education/functional literacy.
4. Sharing of expertise focusing on local resource mobilization, and networking to strengthen the local effort to promote right to food in Nepal.
5. Right based advocacy at local and national level against issues that affects the lives of hungry/poor people directly or indirectly.
6. Building the organizational management capacity, transparency and accountability to achieve the goal of NPG, capacity development of the members and staff in order to excel food security works effectively.

## **4. Focus Areas**

- a. Introduction of Improved agriculture techniques to increase local food production
- b. Agro-based Income generation and enterprise development
- c. Vocational training to generate off farm employment opportunities
- d. Networks to promote right to food and policy advocacy at national level.
- e. Research and training on appropriate technology, climate change and dissemination.