

খাদ্য অধিকার বাংলাদেশ RIGHT TO FOOD BANGLADESH

Context

Bangladesh has witnessed astounding success in reducing poverty and hunger. Poverty in Bangladesh declined from 56.7% in 1991-92 to 31.5% in 2010 to 24.3% in 2016. However, 24.3% of the people (40 million) are still in poverty and 12.9% in extreme poverty. Bangladesh has adopted a comprehensive Food Policy and a fairly large social safety net program, but they have apparently proved inadequate to force down the poverty rate as quickly as expected. Inadequate budgetary allocation, weak management and irregularities in the social safety net programs remain major challenges as far as ensuring food security for all is concerned. It is evident that more needs to be done to expedite the eradication of poverty and hunger. That is exactly what the "Right to Food and Nutrition Campaign" is striving to achieve.

The campaign is an initiative of Right to Food Bangladesh (RtF BD), an umbrella network comprising of civil society organizations and networks, peasants' organizations, trade unions, women organizations, youth organizations, researchers, academia, marginalized people and individual among others. The network emerged in 2015 following the 'South Asia Right to Food- SARF Conference' held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Since inception, besides countrywide campaign and policy advocacy on the right to food and nutrition, the network has been promoting social security program, agriculture, safe food, and mobilizing opinion against food wastage & about food crisis etc. WAVE Foundation has been providing secretariat support to RtF BD's programs.

While the campaign has been running for the last 18 months starting in early 2018, it gathered serious momentum in the second half of the year (July to December 2018). The approaching general elections towards the end of the year gave the campaign a sense of urgency. As a result the campaign grew intense with a series of advocacy meeting, lobbying with the minister and MPs and mass gathering around the demand for framing the Right to Food Act.

GOAL

Ensuring the right to food and nutrition for citizens and especially for the poor, marginalized, women and children.

OBJECTIVES

To encourage the government in taking specific steps towards formulating the 'Right to Food Act'.

To engage the major political parties and stakeholders in formulating the 'Right to Food Act'.

To promote active citizenship at all sphere of the society including students, youths and women in order to establish Right to Food and Nutrition for all.



The campaign takes shape

The campaign came up with some significant decisions related to course of actions while Right to Food Bangladesh (RtF BD) organized 'Right to Food Conference' on 31 March 2018 at Krishibid Institution Bangladesh, Dhaka. The daylong conference, divided into three sessions, included the 2nd Annual General Meeting-AGM. One of the

major decisions of the AGM was to launch a special campaign centering the national elections to engage and influence the political parties for incorporating 'Right to Food Act' as an election agendum in their manifesto. The campaign also planned to organize dialogues with the candidates in some constituencies and raise mass awareness at all levels in support of the movement.

The journey acquires momentum



The campaign starts to gain intensity through an event on 25 July 2018 at the National Museum Auditorium, Shahbag. The Right to Food Bangladesh (RtF BD) organized the event that saw some 650 participants representing 525 NGOs, networks, educational institutions, youth, women and farmers' organizations, trade unions and professional groups. The participants came from 50 districts of Bangladesh.

Three million people signed up for Right to Food Act

One of the major highlights of the campaign has been the involvement of people. Indeed, the campaign draws its strength from the huge support of the common people mobilized by the RtF BD. The signature campaign kicked off in July 2018 and in three months more than thirty lac people from around the country expressed their support for the campaign by putting in their signature. The signature collection effort was driven by some 975 organizations. This effort, on the one hand, helped the campaign spread all over Bangladesh and, on the other hand, gave the campaign a huge boost.

Food is a right, not charity

Food assistance provided under social safety net program or other programs by the government is often viewed as a "support" by various stakeholders. This line of thinking has to change. Having adequate and nutritious food must be considered a right, observed development experts as they discussed the matter in different seminars and meetings hosted by the RtF BD Network.

"There is not adequate resource in the budget for the social safety net. In reality only 12-25% of the beneficiaries get the real benefit out of it. To address this problem this program needs to be planned and executed with a rights-based approach as enshrined in our constitution. One way to make it possible is to enact the Right to Food Act."

- Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chairman, Right to Food Bangladesh and PKSF





More than a thousand organizations joined the movement

The successful run of the RtF campaign would not be possible without the involvement of hundreds of organizations, networks and individuals from all over the country. As the campaign marched ahead it drew more and more organizations in its fold, gathered pace in the process and spread all over the country. The campaign is now more than 1,000 members strong and undoubtedly a mighty force that has no lack of commitment as far as attaining its goal is concerned – the right to food for all Bangladeshis.



Commitment from the Minister

One of the milestones for the RtF campaign has been the commitment from none other than the Minister of Food Sadhan Chandra Majumder MP. At a national seminar titled "Development target of the country: Right to food and nutrition issue" held on 24 April 2019 at CIRDAP Auditorium, the minister was unequivocal in his support for the Right to Food Act.



"I need to understand the structure and substance of the proposed law. If it does not clash with any existing laws, I am all for it. When it is raised in the cabinet before the Prime Minister I will leave no stone unturned to see it through,"

promised the minister.

Garnering support of policymakers

The RtF BD Network has continuously lobbied with the relevant ministry officials besides keeping in touch with the public representatives. The network leaders met the minister and secretary of the Ministry of Food in person as well as other high officials like Director General, Directorate of Food, to make them aware of the campaign and urge them to lend their weight behind the cause.



Building consensus around the table

The campaign throughout its journey has sought to engage the political parties and decision makers. With the 11th parliamentary elections just a month away, the RtF BD network considered it a good time to meet the political parties and share their demand. On 26 November 2018 the Right to Food Bangladesh in partnership with ICCO Cooperation and Prothom Alo therefore organized a roundtable discussion to cultivate a consensus around the campaign's demand for establishing the Right to Food Act. They called for including the matter in their election manifesto. Senior leaders of



Awami League, Bangladesh Workers' Party, JSD, Jatiya Oikkya Prokriya took part in the discussion and expressed their support for the campaign.

Bringing candidates of parliamentary elections onboard

The campaign has prioritized interacting with the political parties to achieve the campaign's goal. While the campaign continued lobbying with the political party leadership at the national level through roundtable discussion and meeting with ministers and MPs, they were also active in the district and local level. In the run up to the national elections the campaign carried out some 30 rounds of dialogue involving the candidates and the voters in the district level. The campaign succeeded to extract promise from the candidates to play their part in enacting the Right to Food Act.









Self-sufficiency, bumper production and right to food

This year (2019) farmers across the country suffered huge loss as the price of rice plummeted on the heels of bumper production. It once again brought forth the weakness in market management and the lack of an efficient coping mechanism on the part of the government when there is a major surplus or deficit in rice production. In a national dialogue titled "Fair prices of agro-products: challenges and future direction" held on 28 May 2019,

speakers urged the government to buy additional amount of paddy and compensate the farmers. They observed that subsidy to farmers, linking farmers to the market, keeping the middlemen at bay, and a functional transportation of agro-products are critical to the country's food security.









Celebrating World Food Day

The campaign took advantage of different national and international days to reach out to more and more people with its demand. As each year, World Food Day 2018 was one such occasion that the campaign observed both at the national and district level. Activities included mass gathering and rally alongside submission of Memorandum to the District Commissioner.



Panchagar

Anuvab **BIKAS Bangladesh**

CRD

Desh Unnayan Shangstha

Dhakmara UP Somaj Kallan Federation

Dristidan

Dudumari Gram Unnayan Sangstha Dudumari Somaj Unnoyan Sangstha Hafizabad UP Somaj Kallan Federation Haribashi UP Somaj Kallan Federation Mirzapur UP Somaj Kallan Federation

Palli Sahitto Sangsta

PROSPAR

Suchana Somaj Unnoyan Sangstha

SVD

Thakurgaon

Community Development Society

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Nazir (Natun Zibon Rochi)

VDS Rangpur AIMS Alor Prottasha

Bijoy Mohila Unnoyan Sangstha Chakbazar Somaj Unnoyan Sangstha

Debi Chowdhurani Palli Unnoyan Kendro

Gram Bikas Kendra

Hargacha Somaj Unnoyan Sangstha Horidebpur Somaj Unnoyan Sangstha

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Rajendrapur Somaj Kallan Sangstha

Samakal Samaj Unnayan Sangstha

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KRISHANI Front

Kurigram NGO Association Kurigram Unnovan Parishad

Mohila Parishad

Solidarity

Sommilito Social Movement

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Gaibandha Unnoyan Network

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JAKS Foundation

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CAB **Focus Society**

Gram Bikash Foundation

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PUP SACO SETU Bandhan **SWAP** Youth Group

Chapainababganj

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Ahasroy Somaj Unnoyan Shagstha Barendrabhumi Samaj Unnayan Sangstha Dabi Moulik Unnoyan Shagstha

Provati Somaj Unnoyan Shagstha Klanishese Mahila Somity

Matri Chaya

MOUSUMI

Obontika Somaj Unnoyan Shagstha Pallibondhu Mahila Unnoyan Shagstha

RANI **TRIUS**

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CARB OSED

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MSP **PARIBARTAN** PDO **PMKS** PRIP TRUST

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Shataphool Bangladesh Sho Unnoyan SSDO STD TRINOMUL

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NDP

Nari O Sishu Kallan Foundation

PWD PNP

PPD

Somota Unnoyan Sagstha

SUK SHARP

Pabna

Anannya Samaj Kallyan Songstha

PROTTASA Arka Bangladesh

Bachte Chai Somaj Unnoyan Sagstha

BEWERA Foundation Ichamoti Shango

Jamuna Somaj Unnoyan Sagstha LORILORCHI Organization Nazirpur Mohila Unnoyan Somity

New Era Foundation

OSACA

Pabna Protishsruti

PORSHI PCD

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RUDO **SEPINI** SHEP SPS

> Suchona Somaj Kallan Sagstha Uddipan Mohila Sagstha

YWCA

Meherpur CDP

Doyel Satata Sangstha

JUS Mukti Konok Mouchak MUK **PSKS** Probrithi PUS

Sandhani Sangstha

Kushtia

RRS

Aloron Nari & Shishu Unnayan Sangstha

ADD Action for Human Development Organization

Kushtia Chamber of Commerce

Manavadhikar Nattha Parishad Manavadhikar Nari Samaj

Manavadhikar Sangrokkhon Parishad

Nikunja

Nari Nirjatan Protirud Committee Nari Nirjatan Protirud Forum

Nikusimaj

Polli Bikash Foundation

Provati Palli Seba Samiti PIPASA Shoilpik

Shiropa Development Society



>>>

SETU SAF SISDA

Chuadanga

Akkhangkha Satata Atmabiswas DEYER JKS Prothasha PUS

RESO Sonar Bangla Foundation

WF

Jhenaidah AID Foundation

Sonar Bangla Foundation

Alive

Adikar Mancho

Bangladesh Manabadkar Kallan Trust

Change and Development Desha Shechsashebi Artho-Samajik

Unnayan EU

Padma Samaj Kallan Sangstha

People Aliince Rainbow Club Rupantar RHECO

Rupantar Samaj Kallan Sangtha

Shova Sako SWBP

Srizony Bangladesh Seba Sangga Unnayan Dara Jashore

Ashraf Foundation Rights Jashore

ΑB

Asroyon Seba Unnayan Sangstha

AFNAN

Ad-din Welfare Centre

Agragati

Bandhu Kallyan Foundation

Bangladesh Foundation

DRO LAMF

Gana Adhikar Foundation Bangladesh

JANKS

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Progathi Sangstha PRESAVE RRF SAVIOUR Somadhan

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Udayan Bangladesh

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Srizon

Chamber of Commerce, Bagerhat

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Upokul Foundation

Adarsha Dusto Mohila Sangstha

Save the Villagers Cresent HELP Shaplaful VDF

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Crescent

Ananna Mohila Samiti Sodesh Satkhira

CDOW Borsa

Bangladesh Vision Costal People Forum Mohila Parishad

HEAD GDF Kheya

Sanchita Mohila Sangstha Jagoroni Mohila Samiti Protibandi Unnayan Foundation

SOPAN Moumachi Progati

Borkupot Ganachetona Sangstha

KSDO .

Nari Unnayan Sangstha

Manab Sampad Unnayan Kendra Nowabenki Gonomukhi Foundation

SUS

Shetu Bangladesh Unnayan Prochesta

Barguna NSS CBDP Annesha Sako DOCAP Siyem

Desh Bangla Development-Association for Women

IZOA Maltitask Assed

Suktara Mohila Sangstha

Mela

Khalifa Foundation Komla Unnayan Sangshta

NSS HP

Uddam Samaj Unnayan Sangstha

Ashar Alo Sangstha Drubo Foundation

Taharat mohila Unnayan Sangstha

Nandan Art Sangkalpa Trust SANGRAM

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Supro Potuakhali Mohila Samiti Potuakhali Mohila Samiti Lalu Panchayet Foundation Bangladesh Krishi Samiti

Anirban Samaj Unnayan Sangstha

CHDP

Bihogha Mohila Samiti

APA

Shuktara Mohila Samiti Palli Unnayan Sangstha Bashbaria Mohila Samiti

Pasha SIDAK

> Dokkhin Banga Mohila Samiti Rokibiya Samaj Kollan Samiti Adarsha Mohila Sangstha

SAKO CDHC PPS **Bhola** PSS

GJUS FDA **Barishal** ICDA SERDO

AROHI CRSS AVAS

PRAYOSHI BANGLA

BMKS BDS

ABC Foundation

RUN CDS VCDS Pranthojon DUJKS SUVO LTN DMUS ASUK

Jhalakathi

Abul Hasem Sangit Academy Bandan Kallan Sangstha

BGS

Chadkati Mohila Kallan Samiti

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> Probaho Protibandi Sonstha Samaj Unnayan Sangstha Steps Towards Development

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Pirojpur

Arik

BharatKati Mohila Kallan Sangstham

CDI Network Dak Diye Jai DDS Foundation

Eskander Welfare Foundation Peoples Development Foundation Pirojpur Gana Unnayan Sangstha Rupashi Bangla Unnayan Sangstha

SIK

Sokoler Jonno Foundation Sundarban Unnayan Sangstha Uddug & Sarupkathi

Tangail ASD

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DEW

Jatiyo Rabindra Sangee Sammelan

Parishad

Samajik Seba Shonghothon

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Ajker Jamalpur

APUS ARP ASPK

Farmers Association Nari Unnoyan Somittee

PROGRESS PROPES





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Alor Pathe Somobai Samiti Asia Chinnomul Manobadhikar Bastobayon Foundation

Asol Kaj Asos **BDERM** Kobi Sanga

Pakuriya Unnoyan Sanstha

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Mymensingh

Akata Samaj Kallan Sangstha Ashambal Theater ASPADA Paribesh Unnavan-

Foundation

Bangladesh Sweets Manufactures-

Association GRAMAUS **GRUS** MKS Mati NGO

MCC Bangladesh Mymenshing District Restura Malik-

Mymenshing Nari Uddukta Unnayan

Foundation Nagorik Andolon

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Sangstha PCC PKS SUS

Seba Foundation

Shishu

Shoshi Foundation Trade Union Society Trinomul Unnoyan Sanstha

Netrakona

Shabolombi Sagstha

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Agrodut Mohila Kallan Samiti

Banogram Mohila Unnayan Bibartan Foundation

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Sabar Jonno Sastha Sejoti mohila Kallan Samiti Trisna Samaj Unnayan Sangstha

Manikganj

ARAB GKT GSS OSD

> SEDAP TRD Dhaka

Action Aid Bangladesh ASF

ACLAB ADAB AFSN ASK ADI

AMAR ODHIKAR CAMPAIGN

Ambala Foundation

ANANDO

Angikar Bangladesh

ANTAR Society for Development

Anukul Foundation Aparajeyo Bangladesh APON-Community

APPB ASA

Assistance for Social Organization-

and Development

ALRD **ARCHES AUP**

Bangla Dhoritry

Bangladesh Adivasi Forum

Bangladesh Bhumihin Samity

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BITA **BERDO BNPS** BNWLA **BPF**

BRAC

BSAF BSEHR BSSF BUKS

BRAVE

BUP **CSR**

Campaign for Popular Education

-CAMPE

Capacity Building Service Group

-CBSG Care Bangladesh

Caritas **CARSA Foundation**

CCDA CCDB **CEDAR** CDIP

CGC **CMFS**

Christian Aid Bangladesh CLG-Syndicate Like G6 Coastal Association for Social Coastal Development Partnership

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CSID

DAM Foundation for Economic

Development

DanChurchAid Bangladesh Deepti Bhuban Shangstha

Development For Better Advancement-DBA

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Development Synergy Dhaka Ahsania Mission Dhoritri Foundation

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Committee Heed Bangladesh

HRLS

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NASaF

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ORCHITA Integrated Development

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Palli Mongal Karmosuchi Palli Shishu Foundation of

Bangladesh

Pally Baul Samaj Unnayan Sangstha PBK

PRDS Pidim Foundation

PKSF

POPI Practical Action **PRATTAY** PRIP Trust

Prism Bangladesh Foundation

SFFP PROTIKRITI PRSF

Rabeya Unnoyan Sagstha

RDRS Bangladesh

RIC







RHDS **RUSTIC** STAF

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Empowerment and Lasting Development-SHIELD

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South Asia Partnership Bangladesh STEPS Toward Development

Swanirvar Bangladesh SWID Bangladesh TMSS

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Voice of Destitute

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WaterAid Bangladesh WAVE Foundation

World Vision Bangladesh Youth Against Hunger

Gazipur BSS

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Sunamgani Jana Kallan Sangstha

Sylhet

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Bangladesh GDA IDEA Jasis

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REDO of Bangladesh Rice Foundation

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PAGE Development Center

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Academy Krira Unnavan Sangtha Akata Mohila Unnayan Sangtha Banglar Darpan Foundation

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Sapna Unnayan Society Sobuj Bangla Srithi Foundation Surier Hasi Society Unity Samaj Kallan Sangtha Urban Youth Society

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Mukti Cox's Bazar Bandarban

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Welfare Association

Centre for Integrated Programme and Development (CIPD)

Assistance for the Livelihood of the

Origins (ALO)

Educational Institutions

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Dhaka University

Bangladesh University of

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Mohammadpur Central University College

Jahangirnagar University Jagannath University Mohamadpur Model College College of Home Economics,

Azimpur, Dhaka

Bangladesh College of Home Economics National College of Home Economics State University of Bangladesh

'Right to Food' moves closer to



Apart from the events and programs mentioned here there has been a large number of smaller scale and local level events throughout the last 18 months or so. These efforts have helped educate the public and encouraged them to rally behind a movement that has direct impact on them. The campaign has matured in the recent months and now enjoys support from a broad range of stakeholders. It also seems to have the political backing that is crucial to establishing the Right to Food Act.





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