

# A Rapid Food Security Assessment in Sajek

**May 2011**  
Data collected  
in March-April 2011



**Sajek is a union in  
Baghaichari upazila  
of Rangamati district  
in the Chittagong Hill Tracts  
of Bangladesh**



**Vulnerability Analysis and  
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**World Food  
Programme**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Background**

The Sajek union of Baghaichari upazila in Rangamati district has always been a food insecure and poverty prone area. The union level poverty estimation of 2001 and the food security perception map of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of 2005 indicated that both poverty and food security were worse off in Sajek compared to other unions in Baghaichari upazila. The mountainous topography, nature-induced hazards and communal conflicts continue to challenge the resilience of the local people. Over the last four years the frequency of crises in Sajek has been intense. The lingering impacts of the rodent crisis of 2007-2008, the reinforcement of the ban on Jhum/shifting cultivation by the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) since 2009, the unavailability of bamboo in the forests due to the bamboo growing season, the political conflict of February 2010 resulting in the closure of the largest market in Baghaihat, and the displacement of households altogether have posed serious threats to the livelihood and food security of the indigenous communities living in Sajek.

In 2008 the World Food Programme (WFP) supported the most affected victims of the rodent attack with its Rodent Crisis Recovery Programme (RCRP). Since then, WFP has been operational in the area and responded to various crises with food, cash and training support. After the communal conflict of February 2010 the Government restricted all international organizations, except WFP, from working in the areas. Thus, even after the conflict, WFP could continue its operations until February 2011. With the completion of the WFP's RCRP, questions arise on how programme beneficiaries are going to outlive the upcoming crisis.

In February 2011, the UPDF lifted the restrictions on Jhum production for the current agricultural season. Despite this, villagers foresee two major problems ahead of them i) the prolonged lean season from May to September with no food stocks and limited income opportunities and ii) a dire seed crisis during both current (March-April 2011) and next agriculture planting seasons (2012).

### **Objectives**

Given the current situation, WFP considered it necessary to assess the depth and severity of the ongoing shocks and their impact on livelihood and food security. A qualitative assessment was conducted in several villages of Sajek from 27 March to 3 April 2011, through 19 Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Out of the 19 FGDs, 17 were held at village level and two were conducted with community leaders, NGOs and local government and took place at union headquarters. The villages were selected based on the proximity to markets and main roads, in Mouzas and reserve forest areas. The farthest villages for the FGD were a two-hour walk from the main road. Due to security reasons, truly remote villages could not be covered. This is likely to bias the findings by not capturing the situation of those individuals who are likely to suffer most among the indigenous communities.

### **Key findings from the assessment**

Jhum agriculture is the predominant economic activity in the area followed by wood and bamboo collection, and casual labour. Plain land agriculture is practised to a limited extent by the Bengali settlers. The scarcity of land and agricultural production continues to limit the capacity of tribal people to access sufficient amounts of food or cash to help them until the next harvest. Therefore bamboo and wood collection, and casual labour become important alternative economic activities during difficult times. The cessation of two important economic activities, namely Jhum cultivation and bamboo collection have shrunk their income opportunities as well as household food supply. The only Jhum cultivation allowed in the area is turmeric, and only few farmers from the administrative Mouza areas produced some Jhum rice. The majority of the focus group participants

reported that over the last four years their income from agriculture and bamboo collection reduced by 10 to 40 percent, whereas casual labour has become their main income source. However, the money earned through casual labour is insufficient or irregular to support household expenditures.

The communities claimed that in absence of alternative economic activities, the lean season extends from May to September, i.e. for five months, instead of the usual four months. It will thus become more difficult for them to outlive the upcoming lean season, as they have neither food stock and seeds from the previous harvest, nor sufficient income or employment opportunities to buy food. Moreover, if the livelihood options do not return to those of the pre-rodent crisis period, the lean season will continue throughout the year, and may lead to a famine-like situation.

On February 19 and 20, 2010 at a time when the rodent-affected population had just started to recover from the crisis with the help of external assistance, communal violence broke out in and around the Baghaihat market area of Sajek union. Following the incident, the local tribal authority announced a boycott of Baghaihat market/bazar, which was the largest wholesale and retail market in the union, and was operational on a daily basis. The closure of Baghaihat market, following the February 2010 clashes has affected the income of the cash crop producers, traders and wage labourers who earned a livelihood from market-based activities. The producers from the eastern part of the union (where the administrative Mouzas are located) and those who live in villages away from the main roads are counting higher travel costs to bring their produces to other markets in Sajek and in the nearby Dighinala upazila. In addition to travel costs, producers have to pay illegal tolls to the forest guards to bring goods to the market. Given all these costs, farmers are not able to get profitable prices for their products in any of the alternative markets, and their profit margin is thus less than that of Baghaihat market.

The combined shocks have contributed to increasing household expenditures, while income has not increased accordingly. Many households whose major source of rice was subsistence production are, by and large, purchasing food and non food items from alternative markets, and paying prices that are ten to twenty percent higher than those of Baghaihat market.

While availability and access to food in Sajek are constrained by various natural and socio political factors, the increasing food prices represent an additional threat to the food security of the most vulnerable groups, especially marginal farmers, casual labourers and female-headed households. All the focus group participants were unanimously expecting an increase in food prices during the upcoming rainy/lean season that will further deteriorate their food security.

In terms of food consumption, WFP beneficiaries reported to have a better dietary diversity than other vulnerable households. Non-beneficiary households are not able to meet their usual dietary needs, they have reduced their meal size, and the frequency of protein consumption has decreased to once a week. Four years ago, they had a variety of vegetables and fruit items from Jhum production and consumed protein items like fish and pork two to three times a week. WFP beneficiaries mentioned that with the assistance that they received in February-March 2011 they would be able to support their family for one more month. But after that, they will have no rice stock and will not be able to produce staples to support their families, especially during the monsoon season.

As WFP interventions were completed in February-March 2011, beneficiaries are becoming increasingly concerned about their food security and livelihood, and worried of going back to the pre-assistance sufferings. Irrespective of WFP's beneficiary and non-beneficiary households, Jhum farmers and casual labourers living in remote villages and away from the main roads have a comparatively poorer diet. They consume mostly rice, seasonal vegetables and small quantities of meat and fish paste/fish once a month, depending on availability and their income. On the other hand, Bengali communities and Jhum villagers living close to the main roads have a better quality

diet constituted of rice, pulse, seasonal vegetables and animal protein items like fish/fish paste and pork/chicken at least once/twice a week.

The FGD participants ranked the Jhum ban and bamboo flowering as the most important factors that have directly affected the livelihoods and food security of the people in Sajek. High food prices came up as another important shock, followed by the closure of Baghaihat market.

In terms of coping strategies, WFP beneficiaries are not practising any as yet however, they are afraid that they will soon become more vulnerable. Amongst other households, the most commonly practised coping behaviours were reducing meal size, eating less preferred food especially wild foods like jungle potatoes and immature crops, and borrowing money. Given the recent political tension and social insecurity, many male members did not opt for seasonal migration during the agricultural lean season/rainy season as they were worried about the security of their household members.

Despite the recent lifting of the Jhum ban, many farmers are still unable to cultivate Jhum lands due to a seed crisis. The only option is to purchase seeds from the nearby upazila markets or the bordering Mizoram State of India at an inflated price, which will significantly increase the production costs. The current price of seeds is reported at Taka 800/kg, whereas before the rodent crisis it was Taka 200/kg, an increase of 300 percent over four years. Many marginal farmers cannot afford such high costs. This will force them to take loan/dadon at very high interest rates from the local traders and fall into debt.

A market assessment conducted by WFP revealed that prices of goods at the alternative markets are higher than those at Baghaihat market. However, the volume of trade has increased in the alternative markets, whereas only ten to twelve shops are still operational at Baghaihat. Most of the traders reported that beneficiaries never sold WFP food rations at the market, and that they only sold home grown vegetable produces.

## **Recommendations**

Under the current circumstances, short term measures should be taken to protect the vulnerable population from the food crisis in the lean season. A cash grant for the marginal Jhum farmers to purchase seeds is recommended as an immediate measure. Since cash and food transfers through structural maintenance works become difficult during the rainy season, general food distribution as targeted relief for the vulnerable households should be implemented as a short to medium term measure, especially for poor households affected by conflict and rodent attack, female-headed households with disabled husbands or no earning members, large size households with few income earners, households with no regular income and marginal Jhum farmers with no alternative income opportunities. The nutrition situation of the children under five and their mothers as measured by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in 2008 in Sajek was not critical, and warrants nutritional assistance for the respective groups. Therefore along with food distribution, supplementary feeding for children, pregnant and lactating women and nutrition trainings for the adult population are also recommended to prevent a further deterioration of child and maternal nutrition.

Sajek is located in a conflict-prone region where social, economic and political shocks are often accompanied by natural shocks. In order to build the resilience of the poor and vulnerable, some medium and long term measures with recovery and prevention objectives need to be planned and implemented. Support to various livelihood components, for example cash grants for the creation of productive assets combined with relevant trainings on nutrition and income generating activities (IGA) are viable medium term measures. Finally, assistance with agricultural inputs for a more sustainable Jhum agriculture and fruit orchards/mixed fruit gardens, coupled with advanced technology have been identified as the key long term needs of the tribal community.



## **1. Background**

Sajek is the most remote union under Baghaihat upazila of Rangamati district and constitutes of 607 square miles of area. The western strip of this union is occupied by the Kasalong reserve forest and the eastern strip is divided into 6 administrative Mouzas with 126 villages. The 2001 Census estimated a population size of 23,205 in this union, which gives a density of 38 persons per square mile. The union has mountainous topography (Annex-1) with dense forest especially bamboo, therefore the settlements are sparsely located and often accessible only by foot or small boats. The major tribal communities in this union are Chakma, Tripura, Pangkhua and Lushai. Since the 1980s a large number of Bengalis came to this area under the government transmigration programme, and occupied valleys and plain lands. Agriculture is the predominant source of livelihood in the union. The tribal communities depend on labour intensive Jhum/shifting cultivation and bamboo collection, whereas the Bengali settlers practice plain land agriculture and trade.

Over the past several years the livelihood and food security of the population of Sajek have encountered multiple challenges. These have included extensive damage of Jhum crops due to a rodent attack, scarcity of employment opportunities and food stock due to communal conflict, ban on Jhum cultivation and unavailability of bamboo during the bamboo flowering and growing seasons.

### **1.1. Rodent attack in 2007-2008**

The unions in Rangamati and Bandarban bordering the Mizoram State in India were hit by a large infestation of rats/rodents that destroyed the crops on a mass scale. The rodent problem started in 2006 and peaked in November 2007 during the harvest time of Jhum crops and continued till 2008. This was termed as an ecological phenomenon that occurs every 48 years, and it was caused by the excessive flowering of bamboo in wild bamboo forests in the Indian State of Mizoram and in the bordering areas with Burma and Bangladesh. After flowering, the bamboo dies and regenerates from seeds, and the seeds become the major food for the rodents which can swiftly increase their biological reproduction thus causing a boom in their population. In 1958 a rodent attack of this magnitude hit the area and caused severe famine.

The Baghaichari upazila was reported to be one of the severely affected upazilas (Annex-2) by the rodent attack of 2007-2008<sup>1</sup>. Most of the grain and cash crops in the Jhum field, as well as the crops stored in the granaries were either destroyed or damaged. Following the mass destruction of crops, the Jhum households had to consume the grains that they had saved for seeds. As a result, the next crop production became uncertain and posed significant implications on food security.

### **1.2. Ban on Jhum production since 2009**

In Jhum/shifting cultivation the land is usually cropped every five to eight years to allow natural vegetation to grow, and the soil to rest and replenish. However, due to the increased population pressure and the limited availability of fertile agricultural land, the cropping interval in Jhum has decreased to two to three years, eventually reducing soil fertility and crop production. For many years the Government has imposed a ban on Jhum cultivation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. However, the ban has not been enforced at local level, and indigenous communities have continued to practise Jhum cultivation. In 2009, a tribal political group called the UPDF strictly reinforced the ban with the support from village leaders in order to restore the fertility of the Jhum lands.

### **1.3. Communal conflict and the closure of Baghaihat market in 2010**

The region is currently recovering from decades of armed conflict. This conflict continues today in political tension that sometimes leads to violence. This is mainly fuelled by land disputes between

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<sup>1</sup> Chittagong Hill Tracts Rodent Crisis, Rapid Needs Assessment, August 2008, WFP

indigenous people and Bengali settlers (newly migrated to the Chittagong Hill Tracts). On February 19 and 20, 2010 at a time when the rodent-affected population had just started to recover from the crisis with the help of external assistance, communal violence broke out in and around the Baghaihat market area of Sajek union. According to official government statistics, 474 households were directly affected, with 77 Bengali and 397 tribal houses being burned down. Following the incident, the local tribal authority announced a boycott of Baghaihat market, which was the largest wholesale and retail market in the union, and was operational on a daily basis. The boycott has resulted in the closure of the market, and thus affected trading as well as market-based livelihoods.

**Quote from FGD participants:**

*"Since 1996-1997 the situation has not been so bad. It is unclear what the future will be like. We are under a constant threat following the conflict in 2010."*

#### **1.4. Cessation of bamboo collection**

Bamboo collection is another key livelihood component, especially for the tribal population. The bamboo flowering season appears every fifty years and after that it takes four to five years until bamboo can be cut again. During 2007-2008 the bamboo flowering season reappeared and all bamboo died in the forests, leading to a major crisis in bamboo collection. To date (2011), the growing bamboos have not matured enough to harvest, and the crisis sustains. In addition, the reserve forest authority has imposed restrictions on bamboo collection.

#### **1.5. WFP response to the crisis**

In 2008 WFP started the Rodent Crisis Recovery Programme (RCRP), an operation where food relief was distributed for a period of four months to 25,680 affected households living in the seven most rodent-affected upazilas of Rangamati and Bandarban Hill Districts, including Sajek. During WFP's first round of distribution in May-June 2008, MSF provided a one-off distribution of 4 litre oil, 1kg fish paste and 1kg salt, which complemented WFP's distribution of 50kg rice. This first phase was funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO). In 2009, WFP extended the RCRP by including with recovery interventions, such as community asset creation through food and cash for work, and training in income generating activities. This phase started in April 2009 and lasted nine months, targeting around 3,720 households. The second phase of the RCRP was funded by ECHO.

The RCRP continued for a third time with similar interventions. A total of 3,750 households were included in the third phase, the majority already assisted under the previous phases of the RCRP. In addition, 233 vulnerable households were also provided with targeted relief. The third phase of the RCRP was funded by ECHO, the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID) and the Government of Japan. After the conflict of 2010 the Government restricted all operations by national and international organizations in Sajek. Only WFP and Assistance for the Livelihoods of the Origins (ALO), one national NGO, are currently allowed to work in the area. In parallel to the RCRP, WFP also provided food assistance (rice) to 433 households affected by the conflict in February 2010. Both the RCRP- third phase and the conflict response were implemented from April 2010 to February 2011.

## **2. Objectives**

The lingering impacts of the rodent crisis of 2007-2008, the ban on Jhum cultivation since 2009, the unavailability of bamboo in the forests due to the bamboo growing season, the political conflict of February 2010 resulting in the closure of the largest market in Baghaihat and the displacement of households altogether have posed serious threats to the livelihood and food security of the tribal and Bengali communities living in Sajek union. WFP has provided assistance to the victims of various shocks in different phases, and with the end of its assistance in February 2011, it felt the



need to assess the current situation and identify the potential implications on livelihood and food security.

The major objectives of the current assessment were:

- To identify the severity of the prevailing shocks and crises.
- To assess the possible continued impacts of the shocks on the lives and livelihoods of both WFP households and other vulnerable households.

### **3. Methodology**

This was a qualitative assessment based on 19 FGDs with Bengali and tribal communities, union level representatives and NGOs. Each FGD was constituted of 8 to 15 participants. The discussions were conducted from 29 March till 3 April 2011. Out of the 19 FGDs, 17 were held at village level (Annex-3) with Jhum farmers and casual labourers, male and female, from beneficiary and non-beneficiary households. Most of the village level discussions were held in the courtyards of the houses of Headman or Karbari<sup>2</sup>. Two FGDs with community leaders, local elites and local level government officials and NGOs were conducted at union headquarter.

The FGD sites were selected according to three criteria: i) distance from major markets, ii) distance from the main roads and iii) villages within Mouzas<sup>3</sup> and reserve forest areas. The majority of the FGD sites were zero to two hours walk from the main roads.

For the market assessments, traders from 4 markets were consulted, of which 3 were big to medium sized markets and one grocery shop.

### **4. Limitations of the assessment**

Due to time constraints, no household survey was conducted. This qualitative assessment provides an overall picture of the crises, but it will not be possible to quantify the impacts.

For security reasons the assessment could not be conducted in truly remote villages. Food security in these remote areas is said to be grave, and most severe coping mechanisms are practised. Remote villages are not accessible via vehicular roads, and can only be reached with a one to two days walk from the main roads. Furthermore, the UN Security prohibits any night travel and overnight stay in the remote areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is therefore safe to assume that the FGDs conducted in those villages closer to the main roads are unlikely to capture the situation of the individuals who suffer most.

## **5. Findings from the focus group discussions with villagers and community leaders**

### **5.1. Livelihood and agricultural production**

Agriculture is the predominant economic activity in the area, followed by wood and bamboo collection, and casual labour. It is difficult to find groups who rely on a distinctive livelihood as all these three economic activities are simultaneously or alternately practised by most of the tribal people in Sajek.

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<sup>2</sup> Headman is the leader of a number of villages and is responsible to collect revenues from the indigenous people. Karbari is a village leader who reports to a Headman.

<sup>3</sup> Mouza is an administrative layer below Union.

In recent years most of the employment opportunities have dried up due to the rodent crisis followed by the Jhum ban, the discontinuation in bamboo collection and the communal conflict. All this has led to a change in the main sources of income. In fact, households who once earned an income from selling cash crops and bamboo are now largely depending on casual labour as their primary source of income. As casual labour is not a lucrative substitute for Jhum production or bamboo collection, the total household income has inevitably decreased.

**Table 1. Changing livelihoods and income sources in Sajek**

<b>Economic activities</b>	<b>Current status of the economic activities</b>	<b>Income from the activities increased /decreased compared to the pre-crisis period</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>	10 FGDs out of 19 confirmed that the main source of livelihood remains agriculture as it provides the highest proportion of their cash income, followed by casual labour and bamboo/wood collection.	Income from agriculture decreased by 10 to 30 percent
<b>Casual Labour</b>	8 FGDs identified casual labour as their primary income source. Previously, their main livelihood was Jhum cultivation.	Household income from casual labour increased by 10 to 40 percent
<b>Bamboo/wood collection</b>	9 FGDs reported that once bamboo collection was their primary occupation. Now they have switched to casual labour and bamboo collection has become their secondary occupation.	Income from bamboo collection and selling decreased by 50 percent

Source: Current assessment, April 2011

### 5.1.1. Jhum cultivation

In good harvest years tribal households used to produce both subsistence and cash crops through Jhum/shifting cultivation and plain land agriculture. However, as land ownership is almost absent in Sajek, farmers in the Mouza areas cultivate Jhum with permission and land allocation from the Headman/leader of villages, whereas villagers in the reserve forest area cultivate legally or illegally. With such scarcity of agricultural land, and a one-time crop production, farmers cannot harvest enough rice to overcome the lean period, even during normal years.

In the past two years the ban on Jhum cultivation has significantly reduced the production of staple crops like rice and other Jhum cash crops, such as chilli, cucumber, pumpkin, sesame, pineapple, potato etc. Last season farmers managed to produce a small amount of rice in the plain lands, especially around the Baghaihat bazar valley. Few farmers produced some Jhum crops, including rice, with special permission from the local tribal authority. Out of the seventeen villages covered for this qualitative assessment, six were found to be involved in Jhum-rice production at small scale, mostly for household consumption. These villages belong to the eastern administrative Mouzas like Kanglak and Ruilui. The FGD participants also reported that Jhum cultivation in the Mouza areas was not as strictly prohibited as in the reserve forest areas.

Over the last two years Jhum farmers have been mostly producing turmeric and ginger, in both administrative mouzas and reserve forests. Despite the ban, turmeric production is allowed in the area, as this crop requires limited amount of land, is not prone to rat infestation and provides cash income. In the past, turmeric was a secondary Jhum crop produced every three to five years along with other major crops; recently it is produced in larger quantities and has become an important source of income for the Jhum farmers.

Almost all the participants in the FGDs reported that the last turmeric harvest was not satisfactory due to poor soil quality. In addition, the production costs have gone up due to the increased price for seeds and fertilizer. This year the RCRP households have invested the money from the WFP cash transfer programme in Jhum-based turmeric production. The non-RCRP households however, had to depend on a borrowing system locally known as “Dadon”, which is based on various loan contracts. This means that a loan of Taka 1000-2000 has to be repaid after 1 year with 3-4 maunds of wet turmeric, or 1 maund of dry turmeric etc. Some farmers also tried to sell their produces in other markets, but the profit margin was not as good as what they used to get at the Baghaihat market.

The FGD participants also pointed out that the lack of Jhum seeds is another major crisis, especially during the current agricultural season. This means that even if the Jhum ban is lifted farmers cannot cultivate. Furthermore, due to the lack of Jhum cultivation for the past two years, no seeds are currently available. The only option for the farmers would be to purchase seeds from the nearby upazila markets or the bordering state of India at an inflated price, which will significantly increase the production costs. The current price of seeds is Taka 800/kg whereas before the rodent crisis it was Taka 200/kg, an increase of 300 percent over four years. Many marginal farmers cannot afford such high costs for seeds, and this situation will force them to take loan/dadon at very high interest rates from the local traders and fall into deb.

#### **5.1.2. Homestead production**

Vegetable and fruit gardening in the courtyard or open space near the house is a common practice in these villages. Families grow vegetables like pumpkin, sweet gourd, bitter gourd, leafy vegetables and some fruits like banana, mango, jackfruit, lichi, custard apple, water melon. Most of these items are produced in small quantities for household consumption, and availability is seasonal.

In the FGDs Jhum producers have said to practise some livestock rearing, but they have also complained of the frequent death of fowl due to various diseases. Villagers do not usually consume their poultry/livestock, as they prefer to sell them during the lean seasons, but the closure of Baghaihat market has made this activity more difficult.

#### **5.1.3. Casual labour**

In these remote areas most casual labour is based on work in the Jhum fields. Other casual labour opportunities include working at the market place, on road construction sites, cutting grass and wood. However, all these options are only temporary and seasonal, and the income from casual labour is never sufficient to make it a major livelihood. The wage rate for male agricultural labourers generally varies between Taka 150-200, while for women it ranges between Taka 80-150. The availability of non agricultural labour for women is limited.

#### **5.1.4. Bamboo collection**

Bamboo traders usually contract out the bamboo collection to local contractors. The contractors then hire casual labourers to cut and transport the bamboo. Casual labour from this activity is the most lucrative amongst all the types of casual labour. Earnings can be as much as Taka 200 per day. For many remote communities this has represented a viable income source to supplement the small Jhum agriculture until the next harvest. Government and the local tribal authority have restricted the collection of firewood and bamboo, so any quantity is now collected illegally and difficult to sell.

**Figure 1. Livelihood and agriculture calendar for Sajek**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rice (jhum)												
Turmeric & Ginger (jhum)												
Pineapple (harvested after one year from plantation), (Jhum)												
Sesame, cucumber, pumpkin, potato (Jhum)												
Bamboo collection												
Field clearing & planting for Jhum												
Harvesting of Jhum crop												
Bamboo collection												

Source: Current assessment, April 2011

### 5.1.5. Critical impacts on livelihoods and agriculture

As Jhum cultivation and bamboo collection are labour intensive activities, they provide livelihood opportunities for the vast majority of the tribal people, from farmers to wage labourers. The ban on Jhum cultivation has however restricted their livelihood options and prolonged the lean season. In normal years, the lean season coincided with the rainy season (June to September) when all the livelihood options came to a halt and food security deteriorated. Tribal communities currently claim that in absence of alternative livelihoods the lean season will be extended from May to September i.e. for five months, and that if the Jhum ban is not entirely lifted, the lean season will continue throughout the year.

In the past two years there was no production of major Jhum crops like rice and cash crops, with negative implications on food availability and livelihoods. Currently the major source of cash for the Jhum households comes from the sale of turmeric and ginger, but this has also reduced their income diversity. Most households were forced to consume the seeds that they had preserved for the Jhum crops. And as a result, even if the Jhum ban is lifted, farmers will still face a dire crisis of seeds and will be left with no option but to buy seeds from the adjoining Dighinala upazila under Khagrachari district or from India at a very high price.

The limited production of rice over the years has exhausted household stocks. Many people, whose major source of rice was subsistence production, are by and large, purchasing rice to meet household demand. Additionally, households are buying essential non food items from alternative markets at higher prices. All this has led to greater household expenditures, but income has not risen accordingly.

The closure of Baghaihat market has affected cash crop producers, traders and wage labourers who earned a livelihood from bazar-based activities. Producers from the eastern part of the union (where the administrative Mouzas are located) and those who live in remote villages away from the main roads face higher travel costs to bring their produces to Boalkhali market, another large market in the nearby Dighinala upazila (on the western part). Also, farmers are not getting fair prices for their products in any of the alternative markets, with the result that their profit margin is now less than that of Baghaihat market.

## 5.2. Food consumption and utilization

Usually the people of Sajek consume two to three meals a day, depending on agricultural seasons. Tribal populations in remote areas and the poor casual labourers usually eat two meals a day. The frequency of food consumption has not been extensively affected by the current crisis, but the quality and quantity of food have been compromised.

Rice and vegetables were found to be the most common food items, regularly consumed by all households irrespective of livelihood and income status. However, consumption of other foods like pulses and animal protein varies by season and income, so does the nutritional status of the people in the area.

### 5.2.1. Diet diversity

**Table 2. Typical food requirements of a 5-member household**

Major food items	Daily requirement	Food
Par boiled rice (Atap)	2.5-3 kg	When all the focus groups were asked about a typical food requirement for a five-member household, they reported what is depicted in Table 2. Generally, during the lean season or crisis periods the quantity of consumption reduces significantly, and the poor households cannot afford pulses and animal protein. WFP beneficiaries reported that their diet diversity and quantity did not worsen much, thanks to food and cash assistance. But the non beneficiary group complained that they were not able to meet their daily dietary needs. As a result, they reduced their meal size and decreased the frequency of animal protein consumption.. Two years back, i.e. before the crisis, most people had access to a variety of vegetables and fruits from the Jhum production and consumed animal protein items, like fish and pork, two to three times a week.
Edible oil	50-100 gram	
Pulses (dal/lentil)	100-250 gram	
Vegetables	2 kg	
Fish paste	50 gram	

Irrespective of RCRP and non-RCRP groups, Jhum farmers and casual labourers from remote villages far off from the main roads had a comparatively poorer diet. They consumed rice, seasonal vegetables and small quantities of meat and fish paste/fish once a month, depending on income and availability. On the other hand, Bengali communities and Jhum villagers living close to the main roads had a better quality diet constituted of rice, pulses, seasonal vegetables and animal protein items like fish/fish paste and pork/chicken at least once/twice a week.

### 5.2.2 Sources of food

For WFP beneficiaries the major supply of rice until the beginning of March 2011 came from food and cash assistance, followed by purchase of rice. Own production was not reported as an important source of food. In those households not enrolled in RCRP or the conflict response programme, seventy percent (on average) of the household rice supply was purchased from the market, 15 percent produced, and the remaining was either bought on cash or credit, or borrowed. Villages around the Baghaihat bazar area reported of Government Open Market Sales (OMS) at subsidized rates which met around 10 percent of their requirement.

Figure 2. Sources of rice for RCRP beneficiaries

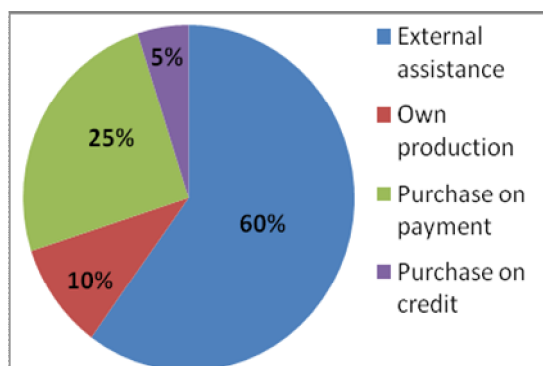
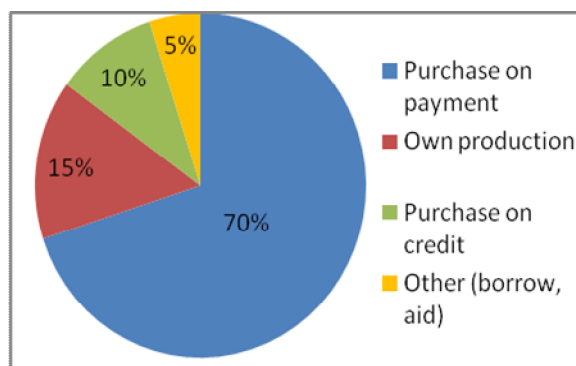


Figure 3. Sources of rice for non-RCRP households



The major sources of vegetables were the homestead gardens. However, homestead vegetables are usually not produced in sufficient quantities to meet the household needs throughout the year. Wild vegetables and potatoes are widely consumed during the lean seasons, especially by the villagers living in remote areas. Wild potatoes which are unlike other varieties of potatoes are available only during the lean season and need to be dug out from the ground. This is the least preferred food by the tribal communities. The small quantities of homestead produces like fruits, vegetables and even livestock are not sufficient to support the households to cope with a prolonged lean season.

### 5.2.3 Food stock for the lean season

RCRP beneficiaries mentioned that with the recent WFP assistance they received in February-March 2011 they are able to support their families for one more month. But after that, they neither have rice stock nor any staple production to support their families during the monsoon season. The only hope may be the small earning from the cash crop turmeric, which would not last more than one month.

#### Quote from WFP beneficiaries:

*"We have food stocks to support us for one month. After that, we do not know how to manage."*

The sufferings of the non-RCRP households have started even earlier, as their food stock has already finished and their only means of survival is the remaining of the cash income from the sale of turmeric and ginger, and erratic casual labour especially during the rainy season.

### 5.2.4. Income and expenditure on food

The current FGDs did not collect information on the level of income from the turmeric and ginger cash crops. However, the standard agricultural wage rate in Sajek was Taka 200-250 for male labourers, and 80-150 for female labourers as of March 2011. Given the restrictions on Jhum and bamboo collection, income from agricultural wage labour has become extremely seasonal, mostly during the turmeric and ginger planting season in March-April, and the harvesting season during January-February, four months altogether. Considering 10 full employment days in a month, a male agricultural labourer earns an estimated Taka 2000/month during the four months of employment season, while a female labourer earns around Taka 1500/month/employment season. During the rest of the year wage labourers try to find temporary employments in the markets, road maintenance works, households and orchards.

Since subsistence crops are not sufficiently available for consumption, households are purchasing rice and other foods with cash or credit, substantially increasing their expenditure on food. Based on the current food prices and the minimum food requirements for a 5-member household, the average cost of a basic food basket comprising of rice, oil and pulses is Taka



3420/month/household. Vegetables have not been considered in the expenditure estimation as they are available through household production or wild food collection.

For those households depending on agricultural wage labour, and especially with a single earning member, expenditure on food seems to exceed their seasonal earnings. Moreover, female-headed households with single earning from agricultural/casual wage labour are the worst affected, as their seasonal income is extremely low.

### 5.2.5. High food prices- an additional shock to food security

While availability of food and access to food in Sajek is constrained by various natural and socio political factors, the increasing food prices have been an additional threat to the food security of the marginal and vulnerable communities. The closure of Baghaihat bazar has also increased the household expenditure on both food and non food items, as these are purchased from other markets and hats (weekly markets) at a higher price.

As highlighted by the focus groups, prices of essential food commodities have shown a significant increase over the past six months. All the focus groups were unanimously expecting a further increase during the upcoming rainy/lean season. Limited income and food stocks, combined with growing food prices would further reduce their purchasing capacity, and inevitably force them to reduce their meal size and live on wild foods.

**Table 3. Prices of major food items**

Food item	Price (Taka/unit) six months back	Price (Taka/Unit) during assessment	Percentage increase
Local coarse rice (kg)	28	35	25
Soyabean oil (litre)	85	125	47
Pulses (Dal/lentil) (kg)	130	160	23
Fresh fish (kg)	175	250	43
Spinach/green leafy vegetables (kg)	12	20	67

Source: Current assessment, April 2011

The 2010-2011 high food prices have been identified as more severe compared to 2008. In 2008 the Jhum producing households could survive the high food prices as they had sufficient food supply and stocks from Jhum cultivation to support their needs; now they do not have this.

### 5.2.6. Health and nutrition

Malaria and diarrhoea are endemic in the union especially during the rainy season, and are the common causes of child mortality and high undernutrition. The nutrition survey conducted in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 2008 by Helen Keller International (HKI) indicated high rates of chronic undernutrition, with 42 percent of the children under 5 stunted and 34 percent underweight<sup>4</sup>. The same survey estimated that 20 percent of the mothers of children under five were moderately underweight (Body Mass Index < 18.5kg/m<sup>2</sup>), which is a sizeable increase from the average found among indigenous women in the 2006 Nutrition Surveillance Project.

<sup>4</sup> Recommended Responses to the Rodent Crisis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: Evidence from the Food and Nutrition Survey, UNDP, HKI, 30 September 2008.

In the same year, MSF measured child and maternal nutrition in Sajek based on MUAC (Mid-upper Arm Circumference) and BMI (Body Mass Index). An alarming forty percent of the children under 5 were found to be acutely undernourished with prominent symptoms of macro and micronutrient deficiencies, such as rough skin with ulcers, discoloured and thin hair, angular stomatitis etc.

Locals have attributed poor health and nutrition conditions to the following causes:

- Poor diet
- Unavailability of safe drinking water
- Insufficient and difficult to access health services; therefore people depend on unskilled traditional healers.

#### **5.2.7. The most food insecure and vulnerable groups**

The following groups were identified as the most vulnerable by villagers and community leaders.

- Female-headed households
- Marginal farmers and casual labourers with limited access to land
- Families with large numbers of children
- The elderly
- Tripura community at Konlak Mouza who serves as day labourers

#### **5.2.8. Critical impacts on food security and nutrition**

As the production of subsistence crops has reduced after the Jhum ban, many producers have turned into net buyers and increased their expenditure on food items. On the other hand, marginal farmers cum casual labourers and female-headed households are finding it difficult to afford the increased food prices as their income has reduced significantly due to the prevailing crisis. In addition to rising food prices, the closure of the Baghaihat market is forcing them to travel to distant markets in Dighinala upazila, and paying higher travel costs as well as higher prices.

The rainy season (June-September) is going to further limit the income and food supplies (except for vegetables) both for the ex-RCRP and non-RCRP households. Rising food prices are expected to have a negative impact on their dietary diversity and food quantity intake. If Jhum cultivation is not tolerated, the struggle will continue beyond the five months of the lean season with a more severe effect on the food and nutritional situation, especially for marginal and vulnerable groups like children and pregnant/lactating women.

### 5.3. Shocks and coping strategies

Participants in the focus groups were asked to rank the severity of the current shocks like Jhum ban, political conflict and the closure of the Baghaihat market, restriction on bamboo collection due to bamboo growing season, and high food prices in a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 indicating the least severe and 5 the most severe.

**Figure 4. The shock scale**

Least severe			Most severe		
0	1	2	3	4	5
				Jhum ban	
				Restriction on bamboo collection	
			High food price		
		Closure of Baghaihat market			

Out of 19 FGDs, 15 ranked Jhum ban and bamboo flowering as the top crises with a score between 4 and 5. This may be explained by the fact that both crises have directly affected the livelihoods and food security of the people in Sajek. High food prices were identified as another important shock, followed by the closure of Baghaihat market. The major reason that Jhum ban and restriction on bamboo collection were identified as severe shocks is

related to the lack of alternative employments or additional skills, besides Jhum cultivation and bamboo/wood collection, for the tribal people. A restriction on the two major activities is thus a direct threat to their survival. The availability of alternative markets, though with limited capacity may have prevented some of the FGD participants from ranking it as the most acute shock.

The restrictions on Jhum production have also impacted the positive indigenous coping mechanisms. Generally, tribal communities used to maintain household food stocks of rice and dried vegetables from the Jhum production for the lean season. But the restrictions on Jhum cultivation have deterred these coping options.

In the past, during the agricultural lean seasons, male members from tribal households used to migrate to the nearby upazila headquarters in search of jobs. Given the recent political tension and social insecurity, many did not opt for the seasonal migration, as they were worried about the security of their household members.

The FGDs informed that the following coping strategies are commonly followed, especially by non-RCRP beneficiary households, and that RCRP households are going to adopt these strategies as soon as their food ration and cash supply from WFP assistance are exhausted.

- Reduce meal size
- Eat less preferred and less expensive food and often wild foods, like wild potato and immature crops
- Purchase food on credit
- Borrow money
- Borrow food and cash from neighbours and friends
- Sell labour in advance
- Eat less (adults) to provide children with food
- The FGD at Kanglak Tripura Para village and Baghaihat bazar area mentioned that day labourers frequently skip meals during crisis periods and often go for days without eating.

### 5.4. Priority Needs

In the backdrop of the seed crisis the FGD participants identified the supply of seeds as an immediate priority, especially during the current agriculture planting season. They anticipated that

the seed scarcity would sustain till the next agricultural season in 2012. Therefore supply of saplings and seeds for the next plantation was also considered as a medium term priority.

Food and cash support, especially during the lean season from May to September/October 2011, was identified as another priority need. While the food ration was meant for the household consumption, beneficiaries intended to purchase other food and non food items with the cash, as well as investing it in the following areas:

- Buy seeds for Jhum cultivation, something that a few WFP beneficiaries have already done with the cash assistance
- Invest in homestead vegetable garden and mixed fruit garden
- Buy livestock as assets

However, the majority of the focus groups identified interventions with employment generation as the appropriate means of providing such support, rather than relief.

With regard to the longer term recovery, focus groups identified priority assistance in asset creation, livestock rearing, fruit orchards and homestead gardening. Along with support in cash or kind, they were also in favour of receiving technological know how on sustainable Jhum cultivation, mixed fruit gardening and livestock rearing.

## 6. Market Assessment

The Baghaihat market was the largest market in Sajek union and the most convenient to visit in terms of road accessibility. Moreover, people could sell their produces and buy essential commodities at a fair price. Alternative market options in the area are a daily and a weekly market at Machalong, but a limited number of products are sold there. The daily market at Machalong has 15 traders of whom three are both retailers and wholesalers. The weekly market operates two times a week. The Simana Chara Bazar is another small market near Baghaihat, with 12 retail traders.

The Baghaihat market had 120 regular traders of whom 20 were both retailers and wholesalers. Due to the market closure, only 4 shops are currently open.

**Table 4. Variation in food prices between the markets surveyed (in Taka/unit)**

Food items	Price at Machalong bazar	at Simana Chara bazar at Machalong	Grocery shop at 10 no. para village	Price at Baghaihat bazar
Rice (kg)	32	35	Not sold	32
Soybean oil (litre)	130	125	140	116
Mustard oil (litre)	230	125	230	90
Lentil (kg)	110	160	160	107
Fresh fish (kg)	200	Not sold	Not sold	140
Irish potato (kg)	10	15	25	8.5
Egg (dozen)	96	96	120	70
Chicken	250	250	250	220

Source: Current assessment, April 2011

The price of food commodities, as reported by the traders of the markets surveyed at Sajek confirms the perceptions of the villagers that markets at Machalong are more expensive than the

Baghaihat bazar. Despite the higher prices of commodities, the traders of Machalong reported increased volume of trade for two reasons:

- The boycott of Baghaihat market has forced customers as well as sellers to turn to Machalong.
- The cash transfer from RCRP and the recent sale of turmeric have provided households with cash to buy food and non-food items.

However, all traders raised concerns about the reduced volume of trade during the rainy season.

In terms of wholesale trading, the retail traders mentioned that they used to buy goods for their shops from Baghaihat wholesale market, whereas now they have to travel to Boalkhali market at nearby Dighinala upazila paying higher travel costs. For the same reason, villagers do not visit this market frequently for retail trading.

Traders also reported that RCRP households never sold their food ration at the markets, and that villagers usually sell only vegetable and fruit items.

## **7. Conclusion & Recommendations**

Food insecurity has always been a chronic problem in Sajek. This can be attributed to the mountainous terrain, the scarcity of agricultural land and the simple lifestyle of the indigenous people. The topography and the dense forests have prevented infrastructural and socio-economic development in this area. The union level poverty estimation of 2001 indicated that the majority of the population in Sajek lived below the lower poverty line, whereas other unions in Baghaichari upazila were comparatively better off. Besides the physical constraints, nature-induced hazards like crop damage by wild animals, flash floods and landslides, and the communal conflict between the Bengali settlers and the tribal communities continue to occur in this area one after another, and challenge the small development initiatives taken by the people with or without external assistances.

Over the last four years, the frequency of crises in Sajek has been intense. Critical events have included the crop damage by the rodent attack during 2007-2008, the restrictions on Jhum cultivation and bamboo collection since 2009, and the communal conflict in 2010. Jhum agriculture is the major livelihood in Sajek, supplemented or complemented by bamboo and wood collection and casual labour. The recurrent shocks have seriously impacted these two major economic activities, and further worsened the food security situation in the area, with a high likelihood of nutritional implications for children and women.

Considering the sufferings of the tribal communities, the local indigenous political group UPDF lifted the restrictions on Jhum production in February 2011. Despite the lifting of the ban, many farmers are still unable to start the Jhum cultivation in March-April as they were not able to save any Jhum seeds from previous harvests due to the Jhum ban. Their only alternative is to purchase seeds from the nearby upazila markets or the bordering state of India at an inflated price, which many marginal Jhum farmers cannot afford. In order to purchase the high priced seeds, marginal farmers will very likely take loans/dadon from the local mohajons/traders at high interests, with a high risk of not being able to repay.

The upcoming challenge for the vulnerable people of Sajek is to outlive the prolonged lean season from May to September with no food stocks and limited income opportunities, possibly small scale casual labour to collect immature bamboo. The seed crisis is expected to persist till the next planting season, as this agriculture planting season is not going to produce enough Jhum crops to replenish the seed gap. Moreover, in March 2011 the communal tension has again fumed up posing restrictions on movement.

Under such circumstances, this assessment proposes short, medium and long term measures to assist the vulnerable population of Sajek.

### **7.1 Short term measures**

During the current Jhum cultivation season the major crisis that farmers are facing is the lack of Jhum seeds, identified as a key priority by the FGD participants. Therefore cash grants for the marginal Jhum farmers to purchase seeds are recommended as an immediate measure. With the rainy season approaching in June, farmers have very limited time for Jhum cultivation, therefore assistance for purchasing seeds needs to be delivered very soon.

The lack of employment opportunities and food stocks during the rainy season will worsen the food security of vulnerable groups. This was another key concern raised in the FGDs. Moreover, due to security reasons many households refuse to temporarily migrate to other areas in search of jobs. With regard to employment support, the FGD participants expressed a preference for food-for-work/cash-for-work type of intervention. However, cash and food transfers through structural maintenance works become difficult during the rainy season. General food distribution as targeted relief should be implemented to prevent a food crisis in the lean season. Such measure will be especially important for poor households affected by conflict and rodent attack, female-headed households with disabled husbands or no earning members, large sized households with few income earners, households mostly dependent on casual labour and marginal Jhum farmers.

The nutrition situation of the children under five and their mothers as measured by MSF and HKI surveys in 2008 was critical, and warrants continued nutritional assistance for the respective groups. Therefore along with food distribution, supplementary feeding for children, pregnant and lactating women and nutrition training are also recommended to prevent a further deterioration of child and maternal nutrition.

### **7.2 Medium term measures**

Sajek is located in a conflict prone region where social, economic and political shocks are often accompanied by natural shocks. In order to build the resilience of the poor and vulnerable, some medium and long term measures with recovery and prevention objectives must be planned and implemented. Support to various livelihood components, for example cash grants for creation of productive assets combined with relevant trainings on income generating activities (IGA) and nutrition are viable medium term measures. Cash grants and asset creation will also assist the farmers to handle the seed crisis during the next agricultural season in 2012.

### **7.3 Long term measures**

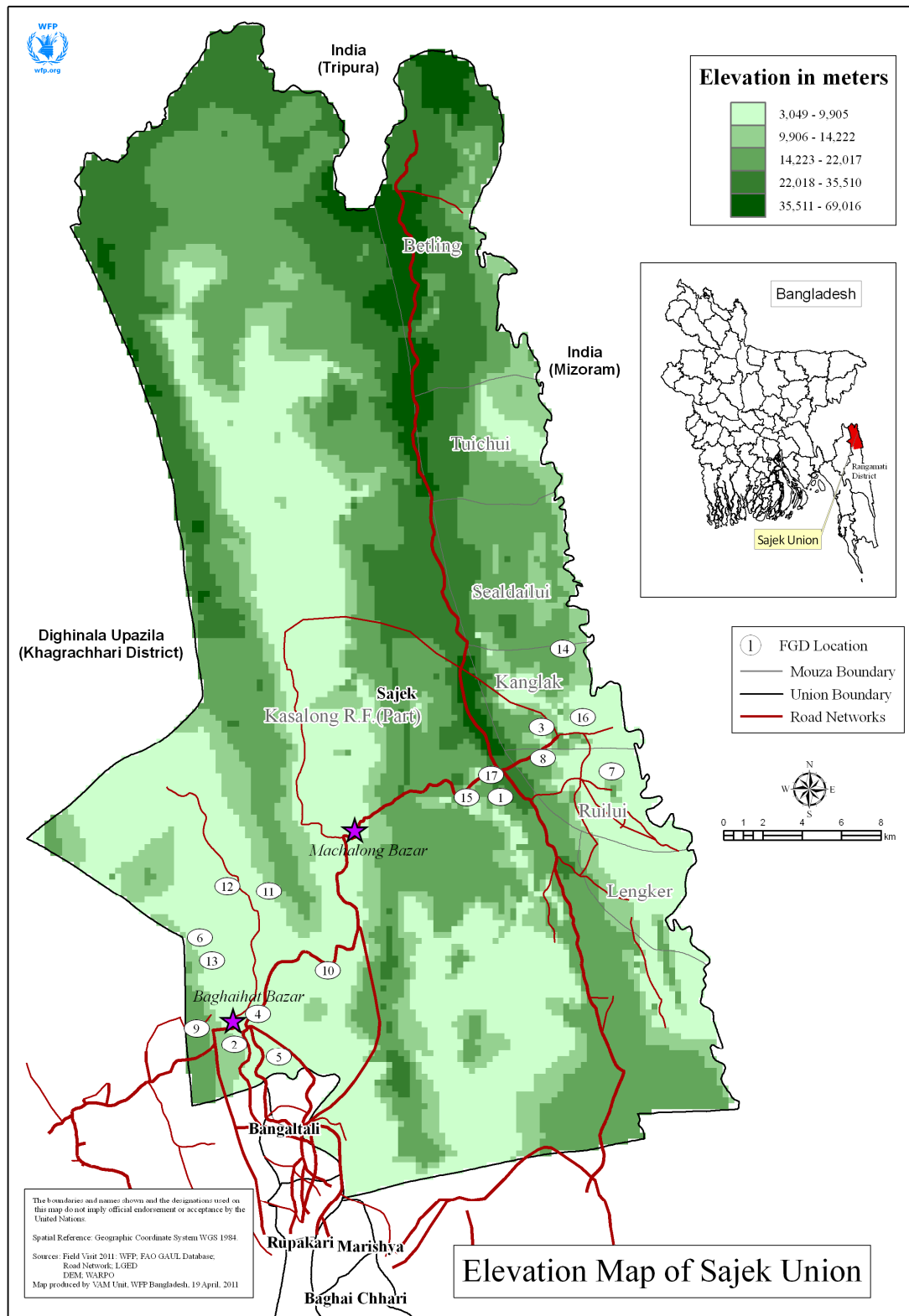
Amongst other measures, support to Jhum agriculture and fruit orchards/mixed fruit garden with agricultural inputs, and advanced technology have been identified as the key needs of the tribal community.

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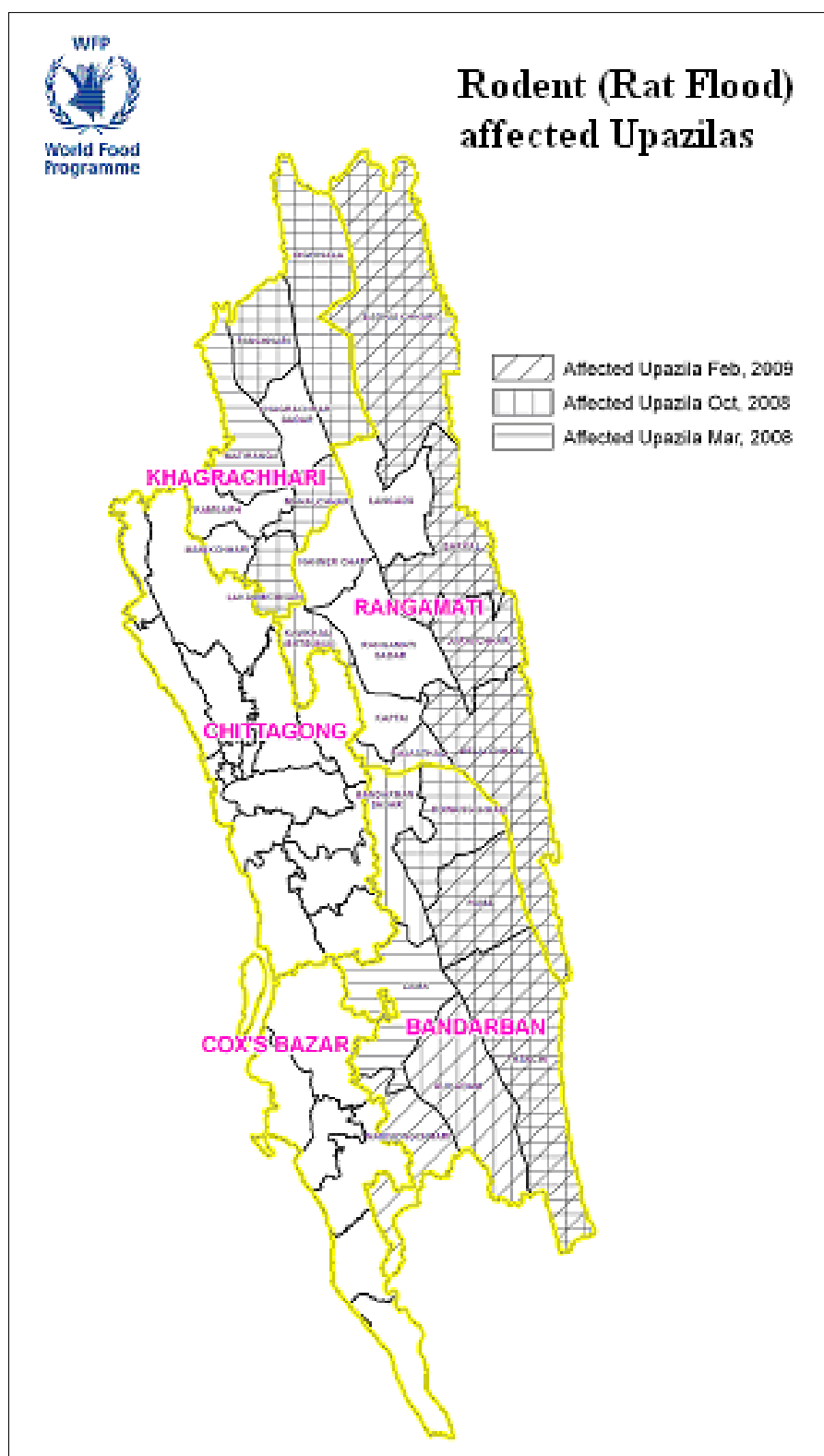
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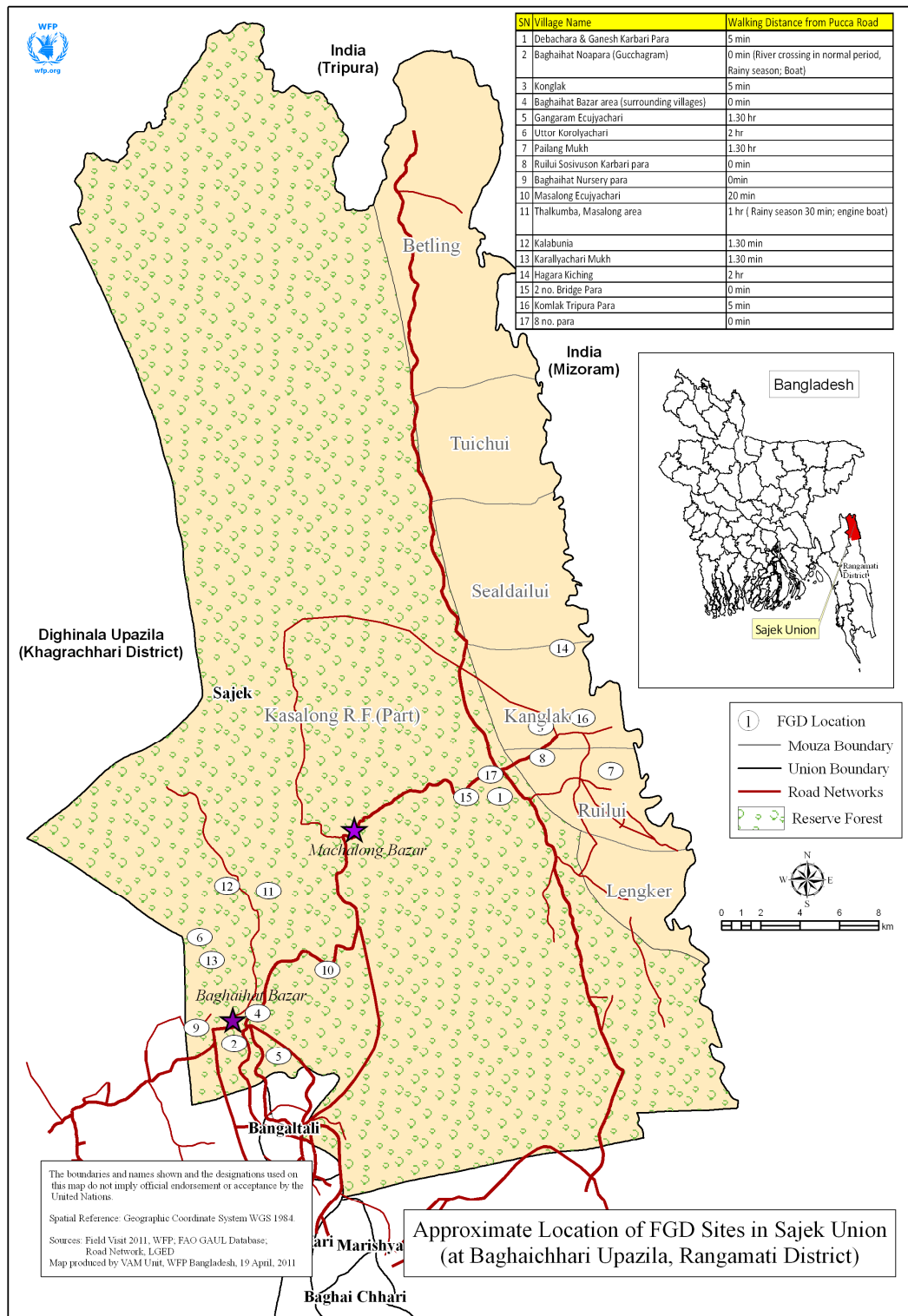
## ANNEX 1. Elevation map of Sajek



## ANNEX 2. Upazilas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts affected by the rodent attack



## ANNEX 3. Approximate location of FGD sites



**ANNEX 4. FGD checklist**

**Rapid Qualitative Assessment of Food Security**  
**Sajek union, Baghaichari Upazila, Rangamati District**  
**March 2011**

**Checklist for Focus Group Discussions**

<b>District:</b>	Rangamati	<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Upazila:</b>	Baghaichari	<b>Number of Participants: Total:</b>	<b>Male:</b>
		<b>Female:</b>	
<b>Union:</b>	Sajek	<b>Name of interviewer:</b>	
<b>Village:</b>		<b>Name of note taker:</b>	
<b>Focus Group Composition:</b>  (Jhum cultivator/ marginal farmer/day labor/GoB officials/others)		<b>Participants:</b> i) WFP beneficiaries/ Non-WFP beneficiary, ii) UP Chairman, iii) UNO, iv) Tag officer, v) Agri/livestock officer, vi) Ward members, vii) Upazila chairman, viii) school Teacher, ix) Headman, x) Karbari, xi) NGO rep, xii) Upazila Education officer	

**1. VILLAGE PROFILE**

- Total no of population and households in the village.
- Most vulnerable groups in this village, their number or percentage. Some examples are female headed households, large size households, jhum cultivators, minority ethnic groups, pregnant and lactating women, young children, elderly etc.
- Different ethnic groups in the village and their number or percentage.
- Percentage of villagers affected by rodent crisis, bamboo flowering or political/communal conflicts.

**2. AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION & FOOD AVAILABILITY**

- Main staple crops grown in the village, their planting and harvesting times. Other crops grown and their frequency? Some examples are rice, pulse, vegetable, fruits, ginger, turmeric, cattle, goat, fowl, egg, milk etc.
- Main cash crops grown in the village and their time of harvest.
- Agricultural produces/ food items villagers usually produce at their back yards for selling. Some examples could be rice, pulse, vegetable, fruits, ginger, turmeric, cattle, goat, fowl, egg, milk etc.
- Food items villagers produce for their own consumption. Some examples could be rice, pulse, vegetable, fruits, cattle, goat, fowl, egg, milk etc.
- The current state of agricultural production, both staple and cash crops. Compare the production of 2010/2011 to a normal year's production.
- The major causes of last poor crop production, if any. Some causes could be jhum cultivation ban, price hike of agricultural inputs (seed, fertilizer), market closure at Bagaihat, attack of wild animals, change of eco-system etc.

### **3. LIVELIHOODS, INCOMES & SAVINGS**

- Main livelihoods in the village. Percent of households dependent on the following activities for their livelihood:  
1) Farming (rice or other crops); 2) Jhum cultivation; 3) Fishing; 4) livestock; 5) Salaried Employment; 6) day labor; 7) Small trade/ business; 8) forest wood cutting; 9) collection of bamboo; 10) Others.
- The nature of these livelihoods such as temporary/seasonal or stable/ year long. Which of these livelihoods have been affected by the recent crises, which have already been recovered and which are still vulnerable.
- Recent changes in the livelihoods of the households in the community and the main reasons for that changes.
- Current major sources of cash income of the villagers. Some sources could be sale of agricultural produces, sale of livestock, casual labour etc.
- Main crises anticipated by the villagers during the upcoming cultivation period (April-May). Some examples could be political factors, jhum ban, lack of seed/stock/capital etc.
- The percentage of households in the village who were affected by (i) ban on jhum cultivation by local political groups and (ii) bamboo flowering as no bamboo livelihood exists.
- How the living and livelihood of villagers have been affected by the recent political/ communal conflict/ tension and associated tribal boycott of Bagaihat bazaar.
- The average daily wage rate for unskilled agricultural and non-agricultural day laborers and the seasonal variation of wages such as during field clearing (Mar-April), during planting (May), during lean season (May-Sept) etc.
- Savings of food and cash for the upcoming lean season by the villagers in the recent past. Any change of savings compared to pre-jhum ban time and the factors that affected their ability to save.

### **4. FOOD PRICES**

- Change of prices of essential food commodities in local market in last 6 months. Which prices have changed and how much.
- How severely has the households been affected by the recent food price hike?
- If any Government subsidized "fair price" (Open Market Sale) outlets are operating in this area, did the households purchase any and how many days did the households do so and the quantity received per day.
- The major causes of increased food prices in this area.
- The expectation of villagers on food prices during the next 3 months.

### **5. FOOD CONSUMPTION & DIETARY DIVERSITY**

- The major sources of the staple/rice in the village.
- The number of meals household members eat each day. Is this consumption pattern usual or worse than usual?
- The types of food items currently eaten by household members. Is this usual or worse than usual?
- Any reports of changes in diets of villagers recently. If yes, which type of changes?
- Any seasonality dimension in food consumption of villagers.
- The typical daily or weekly requirement of household of the major food items like rice, vegetables, pulse, oil, animal protein etc considering a household of size 5.

## **6. COPING STRATEGIES**

- The coping strategies that households currently practice or will be practicing to respond to the changes in food security and livelihood situation in recent days (or during the upcoming lean season, May-Sep).
- How long do the villagers believe that they can feed their families with own food stock before trying for a coping strategy?

## **7 SHOCKS**

- The proportion of households affected by the following shocks: jhum cultivation ban, victim of conflicts, market closure, bamboo flowering, high food price etc over past 6 months or one year.

## **8 HEALTH**

- The common diseases/ illnesses in children, vulnerable groups and adults. The frequency and seasonality of these diseases and any current outbreak of diseases/ illnesses.
- The availability of health services in the village. Do villagers seek health services, if not, what they do during illness?
- Adequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. The sources of drinking water.
- The number of deaths of under 5 children in the village during last 6 months.

## **9 MARKET FUNCTIONALITY**

- The market functionality in this area. Operational on daily basis or weekly basis and the frequency that villagers go to market to purchase food.
- The availability of essential food commodities in the nearest market according to demand. Any report of food shortages in the market
- The amount of time it takes for the villagers to reach the nearest local market (hat) by walking and also the upazila market and the cost to get to the local market (hat).
- The amount of difficulties the villagers facing due to the boycott of Baghaihat bazaar.

## **10 NEED & EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE**

- External food and cash assistances that people in the community are currently receiving or received in the recent past from GoB/UN/NGOs. Assistance type, quantity (ration), percentage of household received and how frequently.
- Is there any external assistance still required to overcome the shocks of rodent attack, political conflict or any other crisis identified and why.
- Given the current situation, what are the most urgent short term and medium term needs of this community like food, cash, clothing, medical/health support etc.
- The long term recovery needs of this community and the package of assistance that will contribute to sustainable recovery. Some examples could be agri-inputs (seed, fertilizer etc), agri equipments, irrigation, trees, health facilities, income generating activities/ IGA, vocational trainings etc.
- The changes that have brought by RCRP to the life of villagers and to the community.
- The expectation/ feeling of the villagers/ WFP beneficiaries as WFP food distribution has already finished. How do the villagers picture themselves in 3 months/ 6 months from now.

## **11. ADDITIONAL REMARKS**