



Rapporteur Note

Session: South Asia

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Chair: **Sultan Hafeez Rahman**, Director General, South Asia Regional Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Philippines

Panelists:

A.M.M. Shawkat Ali, Former Secretary of Agriculture, Bangladesh

G. Chandrashekhar, Associate Editor, The Hindu Business Line, India

Sushila Malla, President, Nepal Nutrition Association, and Director, National Center for Health and Nutrition, Nepal

Rohan Rajapakse, Senior Professor, Agricultural Biology, University of Ruhuna, and Acting Vice Chairman and Member, University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka

Vijay Shankar Vyas, Member, Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister, India

Overview

A.M.M. Shawkat Ali, Bangladesh

- When thinking about strategies for the future, it is important to learn from the models that other countries have used.
- Each country and region, however, has a unique context and significant differences. There is a need to exercise caution when transplanting models from one country to another.
- Sustainability is an important issue in Bangladesh. Often, models rely on NGOs for funding and support so when NGO funding stops, all of the activities stop. This was shown with Bangladesh's Food for Work program and School Feeding program.
- New solutions must be developed to ensure the sustainability of programs in Bangladesh.
- One potential solution is to encourage community participation and cooperatives as many African and Indian programs do.

G. Chandrashekhar, India

- Apply resources for agriculture resurgence. Resources should be used in the following areas:
 - Import delivery system: currently there is no monitoring and it is too open and liberal.
 - Irrigation: currently only 40% of farm land is irrigated.
 - Agriculture extension to farmers.
 - Agricultural technology.

- Rural infrastructure.
- Information technology to distribute market and price information to farmers.
- Apply resources to improve the nutrition status of the bottom 40% of people in India. Currently there is a skew in food consumption. Resources should be used to:
 - Improve the public distribution system: this system currently only focuses on wheat, rice and sugar; it also needs to include pulses and seed oil.
 - Subsidize food prices for the poor.
 - Maintain national food self-sufficiency.
 - Improve social acceptability of coarse grains and cereals.
- Amend the constitution to make health, education and agriculture the responsibility of the *federal* government instead of just the state governments.
- Encourage scientists to explore several different directions simultaneously.

Sushila Malla, Nepal

- Nepal transitioned from a food surplus economy to a food deficit economy.
- There is widespread malnutrition and infection in the country's women and children.
- Coordination between the Government, NGOs and donors, and using evidence-based approaches is a good start to addressing the high rates of malnutrition and illness.

Rohan Rajapakse, Sri Lanka

- Most poor people in Sri Lanka are in agriculture, so agricultural threats are also health threats.
- The existence of multiple agencies in the agriculture sector impedes agricultural growth.
- In order to incorporate nutrition goals into agriculture and rural development projects, the following actions should be taken: expand cash crop production, introduce hybrid varieties, create effective and appropriate extension services, make agricultural credit available to male and female producers, and expand food crop production.
- There is evidence of increasing malnutrition in Sri Lanka, especially in urban areas. This is interesting since the country has the highest per capita income in South Asia. Income does not necessarily improve nutrition without health and agriculture.
- Targeted consumer price subsidies are needed for very poor households. These subsidies are highly visible and allow governments to reach a large number of poor people.
- Targeted agriculture extension to women is also needed.
- Farmer-focused initiatives are needed. The government would like to focus on indigenous fruit and vegetable productions, and helping people learn to eat more nutritious foods.

Vijay Shankar Vyas, India

- Achievements of India:
 - Chronic hunger has largely been eliminated.
 - There is progress in reducing calorie deficiency, but many people are still deficient.
 - Improved food security.
- Currently India is not on track to reach MGDs. One possible reason is the lack of agricultural growth. Other reasons for malnutrition include:
 - Emphasis on rice production instead of coarse grains.
 - Small-holdings are not profitable enough.
 - Health and sanitation are being neglected.
 - Emphasis of agricultural growth in small holder farmers is lacking.
- Important roles for civil society, government and private sector:
 - Emphasize coarse grains.
 - Increase dairy, fruits and vegetable production.
 - Conduct more research and develop highly nutritious varieties.
 - Generate awareness of nutrition at the household level.