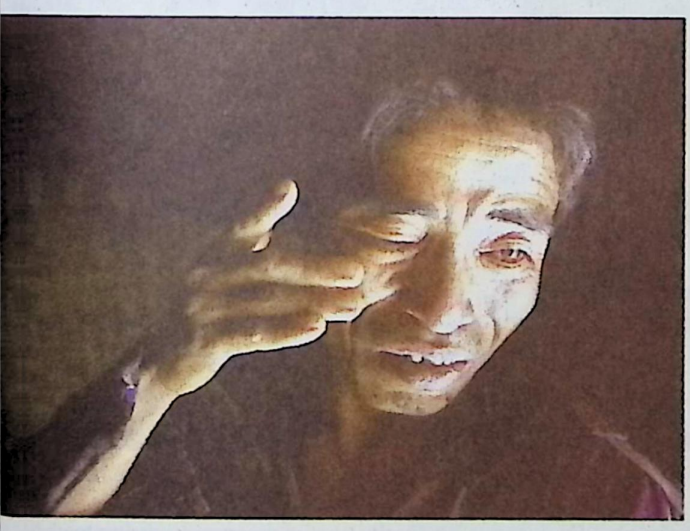
region with the Bangladesh-born photographer Shehzad Noorani on assignment for the United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP). This April will mark the tenth anniversary of the UNWFP's expanded presence in the region and we visited the area to document the agency's programmes and the lives of the people who inhabit the lush rolling hills near the borders of India and Myanmar.

During our nearly two-week odyssey, we travelled down narrow dirt roads, took speedboats across Kaptai Lake, and hiked up steep inclines to meet villagers, like Shashimala and Rima, who showed us how they faced the extreme hardship of their daily lives with dignity and determination. As one weathered Tripura woman in Khagrachari District told me, "As long as there is still life in me, I will continue to search for food."

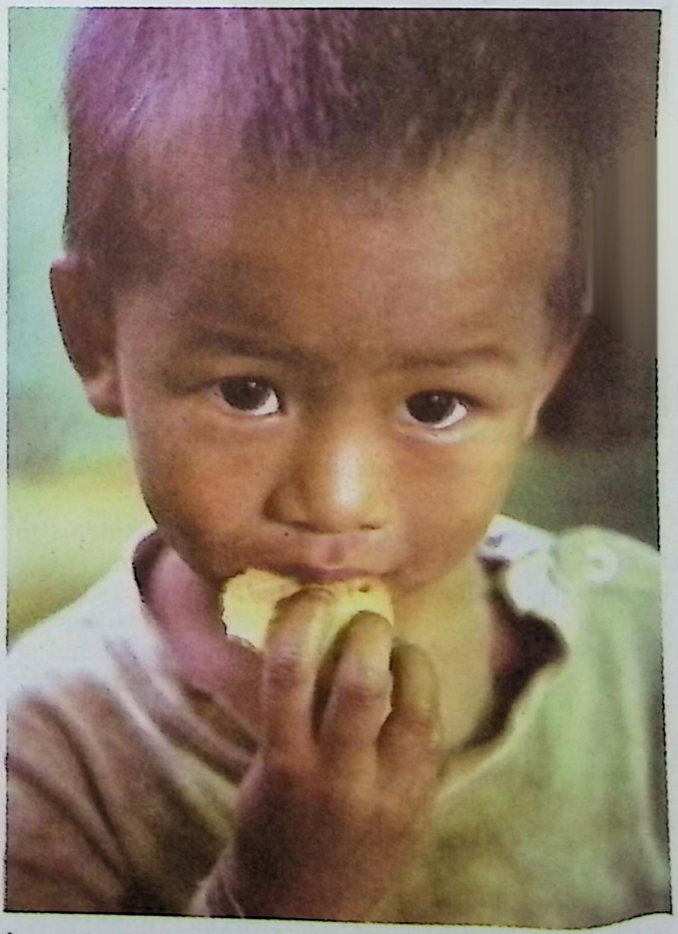
Compared to the rest of Bangladesh, CHT is ethnically and geographically apart. It covers about a tenth of the country and is known for its hilly landscapes, its tribal peoples, the Jumma, and its decades-long tensions with the government. Though there are no current numbers available, the 1991 Census estimated the area's tribal population at 500,000, with another 500,000 non-tribal residents, the majority Bangali settlers. A peace accord between tribal rebels known as the Shanti Bahini and the government was signed in 1997, but it has yet to be fully implemented. Because the area is not yet entirely stable, we travelled throughout the region with a police escort and encountered no problems. More importantly, our journey didn't focus on the region's political tensions, but on the hunger of CHT's ultra-poor.

Since food prices skyrocketed in 2007, an additional 7.5 million people joined the ranks of Bangladesh's hungry, bringing the number of people who consume less than 2,100 calories a day to 65 million countrywide. These are people who are spending more than 80 per cent of their household income on food. More than half have cut back on the number of daily meals, and a small percentage are even going entire days without eating. Throughout CHT we met people who were hit hard by the high food prices, even though the cost of food recently began to slide back down. In the areas suffering from an invasion of marauding rats that devour crops and food, villagers were hit doubly hard and have taken to foraging for wild plants and roots to fill their empty stomachs.

The dull, gnawing ache of hunger is familiar among the poor across Bangladesh, but it was a group of Chakma women, including Shashimala, in



Gulomoni Chakma wipes tears from his eyes in Vijanondorm Village, Saajek union, in Rangamati. His family has struggled to survive by eating wild potatoes and whatever else they are able to scavenge in the jungle.



A young boy bites into a fortified high-energy biscuit in a para centre in Tilakkachara Village.

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