Borders without Hunger

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Thirty-five-year old Kalini, who lives in Ulipur, has never been able to breastfeed her child. As she sits in the yard before her dilapidated thatched hut with her 10-month-old baby, one can see her jutting jawbones, her arms emaciated. The baby on her lap is not in good shape either: he was born premature; his weight at birth has surprised the doctors who work in one of the most poverty-ravished regions of Bangladesh. Kalini has fondly named her child Babar, after the founder of the Mughal dynasty. But chances are there that he is going to grow up malnourished and stunted. "A mother's milk can stop flowing for several reasons, of them one is extreme malnourishment. As he has never had his mother's milk, Babar might face a wide array of diseases," Dr Akmal Mahmud, says, "The worst thing is his immune system will be weak, he will be easily susceptible to diseases."

Even though the cases of child under-nutrition fell during the nineties, it has not fallen in this decade. It is indeed a vicious cycle where poverty leads to malnourishment, and lack of nutrition, for its turn, produces an army of people who cannot give their best in studies or at work. So, economy suffers. The story of Kalini's poverty is entwined with the underdevelopment of Bangladesh. There is no surprise that the child underweight rate in the country is about 46 per cent. Without bringing hundreds of thousands of Kalinis and Babars in remote areas out of the clutches of abject poverty and deprivation Bangladesh will not be able to move on as a healthy and prosperous nation.

Isabel Guerrero, World Bank's vice President, South Asia Region agrees. "Undernutrition is one of the most challenging issues facing South Asia. Poor nutrition robs a child of a chance to succeed and live a healthy, productive life. And yet, an investment in nutrition is one of the social policy interventions that has the highest impact for each dollar spent, in improving this child's future," she has said at the Bank's South Asia Regional Development Marketplace, held last week.

Explaining the idea of the marketplace, Humaira Rashid, Assistant Country Director, Concern Worldwide, says, "The Development Marketplace allows people to express their ideas and innovations in the way they want to and not in any pre-formatted way. This freedom allows them to explore their creativity."

At the market on the offer has been an $840,000 award; the focus has been on children under two years of age and pregnant women. Sixty organisations from

