

FOOD SECURITY & PDS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Most of the villages are backward in India. Population is fast growing all over the world. The population growth rate in India is most alarming. Population has also increased due to increase in life expectancy owing to better medical facilities. However, the cultivation of land is decreasing due to division of families and increase in urban areas. As a result food crisis is inevitable. Fertilizers and pesticides increase the yield in the short run but kill the fertility of the soil leading to lower and poorer production in future. Moreover, overuse of land has already been on the go and has almost reached the maximum possible level. This inevitable food crisis will first hit the producers of food, the people of the backward areas, in form of lack of purchasing power.

The only mechanism to combat food crisis in backward areas is the introduction of Public Distribution System (PDS) but in its true sense and in its loop-hole free nature.

2. BACKWARD AREA AND FOOD INSECURITY

In what sense an area can be called as backward area and why the area is Backward. It is very difficult to judge why an area is backward. It may be somewhat due to lack of natural or human resources. But if one looks at different backward areas it may be obtained that many of them are enriched with natural resources. More over one area may be backward due to deprivation and on the other hand backward area may be deprived due to deliberate use of false consciousness creating policy makers.

At the global level, the South Asian region is home to more chronically food insecure people than any other region in the world and India ranks 94th in the Global Hunger Index of 119 countries. On the composite index of food insecurity of rural India, states like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are found in the 'very high' level of food insecurity, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat. Even economically developed states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka find themselves in the category of high food insecurity

For example 250 years ago Murshidabad was very developed even it was developed than London but today Murshidabad is a backward area. From Economic viewpoint backward areas are those which are less developed in the sense of economic activities viz low per capita income, less health facilities, malnutrition, hut dwellers, low nutrition food intake, poor transport facilities, non memorable roads etc. One of the major component of deprivation is food. So if we want to combat with deprivation emphasis is to be given on food security. Most of the villages are backward in India. Population is fast growing all over the world. The population growth rate in India is most alarming. Population has also increased due to increase in life expectancy owing to better medical facilities. However the cultivation of land is decreasing due to division of families and increase in urban areas. As well as due to crisis of petroleum product in which will going to replenished, bio-fuel are extracted from plant which are cultivated by using land. As a result food crises are inevitable. Fertilizers and pesticides increase the yield in the short run but kill the fertility of the soil leading to lower and poorer production in future. Moreover, over use of land has already been on the go and almost reached the maximum possible level. This inevitable food crisis will first hit the producers of food, the people of the backward areas. If there is a gap between demand and supply then the thing will be taken away by those people who have more purchasing power. So the people living in backward areas, who have less purchasing power, will be affected seriously by this market driven economy.

3. PDS – A STEP TOWARDS THE CORRECTIONAL MEASURE

Now we think about the solution of this problem. It is no doubt that agriculture dependent rural unskilled or semiskilled artisans are losing grounds at a high pace due to lack of skill factor which leads to decreasing purchasing power.

To combat this many measures can be taken by the government. One measure has already been taken by the govt. of India and has been implemented all over the country. This programme is called “Job guarantee scheme” i.e. MGNREGA, which provides 100 days work in a year to each reason. Specialty of this programme is that the work is for unskilled laborers. The main purpose of this programme is to increase purchasing power of poor people leaving in rural areas. But this program me cannot alone alleviate the poverty of rural people. Next programme which will be taken by the govt. is to provide food to rural & urban poor

people by passing food security bill. If this happens and properly implemented it will surely a gigantic step towards alleviating poverty among the masses.

India has the largest food schemes in the world Entitlement Feeding Programmes ICDS (All Children under six, Pregnant and lactating mother) MDMS (All Primary School children) Food Subsidy Programmes Targeted Public Distribution System (35 kgs/ month of subsidised food grains Annapurna (10 kgs of free food grain for destitute poor) Employment Programmes National Rural Employment Scheme (100 days of employment at minimum wages) Social Safety Net Programmes National Old Age Pension Scheme (Monthly pension to BPL) National Family Benefit Scheme (Compensation in case of death of bread winner to BPL families)

4. PDS IN INDIA

In India, apart from the above schemes, the best way-out probably is the public distribution system (PDS) and fair prices shops are all over India even in villages, so if govt. supplies and distributes some basic foods (cereals, pulses, sugar, cooking oil, etc.) through PDS that will be a great help to the people . In this regard Govt. can issue card (different types) according to their income, family members, own home / rented house and other economic considerations and fix up an identity index , and supply foods items in different prices (according to their identity index) i.e. giving subsidy according to the needs of the people . It is a great task and will take sometime but it needs to be focussed in right direction.

The Indian PDS is a national food security system that distributed subsidized food to India's poor. PDS means distribution of essential commodities to a large number of people through a network of Fair Price Shops (FPS) on a recurring basis. The commodities are Wheat, Rice, Sugar and Kerosene.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution are a government ministry of India. The Ministry is headed by a minister of Cabinet rank. The current minister is Sharad Pawar. The ministry is divided into two departments, The Department of Food and Public Distribution The Department of Consumer Affairs.

PDS is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and the State Governments. The Central Government has taken the responsibility for procurement, storage, transportation and bulk allocation of food grains, etc. The responsibility for distributing the same to the consumers through the network of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) rests with the State Governments. The operational responsibilities including allocation within the State, identification of families below poverty line, issue of ration cards, supervision and monitoring the functioning of FPSs rest with the State Governments.

5. EVOLUTION OF PDS IN INDIA

Public Distribution of essential commodities had been in existence in India during the inter-war period. PDS, with its focus on distribution of food grains in urban scarcity areas, had emanated from the critical food shortages of 1960. As the national agricultural production had grown in the aftermath of Green Revolution, the outreach of PDS was extended to tribal blocks and areas of high incidence of poverty in the 1970s and 1980s.

PDS, till 1992, was a general entitlement scheme for all consumers without any specific target. Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was launched in June 1992 in 1775 blocks throughout the country. The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced with effect from June 1997.

6. REVAMPED PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (RPDS)

RPDS was launched with a view to strengthen and streamline the PDS as well as to improve its reach in the far-flung, hilly, remote and inaccessible areas where a substantial section of the poor live. It covered 1775 blocks wherein area specific programmes such as; the Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP), Desert Development Programme (DDP) and certain Designated Hill Areas (DHA). The scale of issue was up to 20 kg per card. The RPDS included area approach for ensuring - effective reach of the PDS commodities, - their delivery by State Governments at the doorstep of FPSs in the identified areas, - additional ration cards to the left out families, - infrastructure requirements like additional Fair Price Shops, storage capacity - additional commodities such as tea, salt, pulses, soap, etc... for distribution through PDS outlets.

7. TARGETED PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (TPDS)

In June 1997, the Government of India launched the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) with focus on the poor. Under the TPDS, States are required to formulate and implement foolproof arrangements for identification of the poor for delivery of food grains and for its distribution in a transparent and accountable manner at the FPS level.

The identification of the poor under the scheme is done by the States as per State-wise poverty estimates of the Planning Commission for 1993-94 based on the methodology of the “Expert Group on estimation of proportion and number of poor”. The quantum of food grains in excess of the requirement of BPL families was provided to the State as ‘transitory allocation’ for which a quantum of 103 lakh tonnes of food grains was earmarked annually. The transitory allocation was intended for continuation of benefit of subsidized food grains to the population Above the Poverty Line (APL)

Government of India increased the allocation to BPL families from 10 kg. to 20 kg of food grains per family per month at 50% of the economic cost. The allocation of APL families was retained at the same level as at the time of introduction of TPDS but the Central Issue Prices (CIP) for APL were fixed at 100% of economic cost. the CIPs fixed in July and December, 2000 for BPL & AAY respectively and in July, 2002 for APL, have not been revised since then even though procurement costs have gone up considerably.

The number of BPL families has been increased w.e.f. 1.12.2000 by shifting the base to the population projections of the Registrar General as on 1.3.2000 instead of the earlier population projections of 1995. With this increase the total number of BPL families is 652.03 lakh as against 596.23 lakh families originally estimated when TPDS was introduced in June 1997. Under the TPDS, the States were requested to issue food-grains at a difference of not more than 50 paise per kg over and above the CIP for BPL families . CIP for distribution of food grains under TPDS except with respect to Antyodaya Anna Yojana where the end retail price is to be retained at Rs. 2/ a Kg. for wheat and Rs. 3/ a Kg. for rice.

8. CONCLUSION

Backward areas are those which are less developed in the sense of economic activities, viz. low per capita income, less health facilities,

malnutrition, hut dwelling, low nutrient food intake, poor transport facilities, non-motor able roads, etc. The major problem IN India is that its food security policy has a laudable objective to ensure availability of foodgrains to the common people at an affordable price. But unfortunately PDS not properly, Worked APL families also use subsidized food, Minimum support price not properly implemented, Input subsidies are not welfare in nature, Issue price is distorted, Market demand is uncertainty and badly administered, Food-for-work scheme is just for name sake, High Cost of Subsidy, Pro Market Biased Policies of The Government, Entry of Corporate Companies into Agriculture Sector, etc.

There is a need to shift from the existing expensive, inefficient and corruption ridden institutional arrangements to those that will ensure cheap delivery of requisite quality grains in a transparent manner and are self-targeting.