

A Critical Study of Public Distribution System as a Tool for Achieving Sustainable Goal - 2030 and Food Security in Jharkhand

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Abstract: *Food Security plays a crucial role for India to achieve the sustainable development goal - 2030 (SDG 2) of zero hunger which aims for a future where every individual has adequate nutrition. Sustainable food security will have to be defined as physical, economic, social, and ecological access to balanced diets and safe drinking water, to enable every individual to lead a productive and healthy life in perpetuity. India is a country where 1/3rd of the total population is dependent on agriculture as the chief means of livelihood. Therefore, sustainability of food is itself is a very important phenomenon where observe certain issue like, poverty, starvation, malnutrition, alienation and so on. For this, the government of India has also taken various initiatives, for a greater management of food in the country. Sustainable development denotes the idea of using resources in a way that can be reused for the future generation. It is a means of conservation of resources for the further use. Public distribution system is one of the instruments for improving food security at the household level in India where millions of poor suffer persistent poverty and malnutrition. The central and state government share responsibility for running PDS.*

Keywords: Food Security, PDS, Sustainable Development Goals, Poverty, Global Hunger

1. Introduction

Hunger alleviation and poverty eradication are the twin objectives of Public Distribution System (PDS) in the developing countries like India. It is intended exclusively to serve as a safety net for the poor by providing essential goods and services, mainly the food staples, i. e., rice, wheat, sugar, pulses etc. to all the sections of population especially the poorest of the poor at reasonable cost. Effectiveness of the Public Distribution System (PDS) largely depends on a large number of policy decisions regarding operational and organizational aspects of the PDS. The present research will intend to analyze the operational aspects of PDS at the grassroots level. It will examine the consumers' responses to various issues in the PDS like quality, price, availability, and accessibility of food grains supplied under PDS, behavior of dealers of FPS with the customers and also the experiences, complaints and grievances of people in the overall functioning and effectiveness of PDS.

The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 provides the for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity and for matters connected therewith or incidental there to This Act was published in the Gazette in India on 10th of September, 2013 but deemed to have come into force on the 5th July, 2013. As per the provisions under section 16 of this Act, every state government shall, by notification for the purpose of monitoring and review of implementation of this act.

Subsequently, Government of Jharkhand decided to constitute an exclusive commission and accordingly the Department of Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs, constituted Jharkhand State Food Commission vide

Notification No 1632 on 13th April, 2017. Pursuant to the said notification, offers of appointment were issued to appoint Mr. Sudhir Prasad, I. A. S. (Retd.) as the first chairperson of the commission along with some person as members. Jharkhand has developed a wide network of 23, 614 fair price shop dealers, covering nearly 5, 17, 159 ration cardholders belonging to 23, 340, 832 families in the State (Government of Jharkhand, 2016: 113). Some additional features of NFSA include: first, free meals for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, from the birth of the child until they are 6 - month - old, through Anganwadi Centers; second identified mothers will also receive at least, ₹6000 as a maternal entitlement, and free meals will be given for their children up to the age of 6; and third, midday meals are provided for school going children up to the age of 14 or standard 8 (Government of Jharkhand 2016: 119). Apart from successfully running these schemes of the central government, Jharkhand also helps the poor through its own State - sponsored programs, including the chief minister's Dal Bhat Yojana. Under this scheme, the government is running 370 Dal Bhat centers by procuring food grains from the market.

Integrated Management of PDS in India

The ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution has launched a new central sector scheme - Integrated Management of PDS (IMPDS). This In this scheme, the eligible ration card beneficiaries covered under National Food Security Act (NFSA) is able to lift their entitled foodgrains from any FPS of their choice anywhere in the country, by using their biometric or Adhaar authentication on electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) device at the FPS through 'One Nation, One Ration Card' (ONORC) scheme. The planning commission, Government of India, after its detailed discussion, decided the basic approach to the PDS by an expert group. The Planning Commission, which is the main

Volume 13 Issue 8, August 2024

Fully Refereed | Open Access | Double Blind Peer Reviewed Journal

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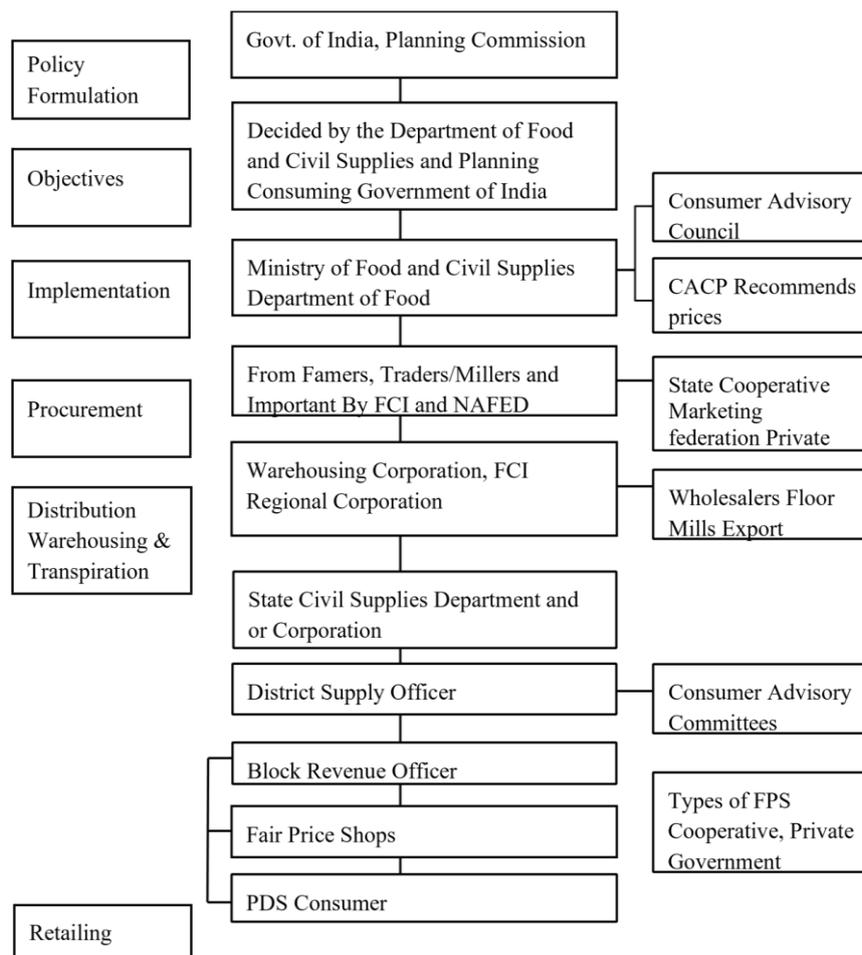
policy formulation body of the Government, decided about the objectives to be assigned to the PDS such as

- Stabilizing prices of essential commodities.
- Equitable distribution of essential commodities,
- Provision of essential goods to the vulnerable sections of the population at reasonable prices.

The country has a three - tier structure in public distribution management. At the apex level there are the national level agencies with the task of processing, storing and attending to other logistic management functions. They include the Food Corporation of India, State Trading Corporation, Coal India Limited, The Public Sector Oil Companies, the National

Cooperative Marketing Consumer federation, and the National Agriculture Cooperative Consumer Federation. They procure and supply certain key commodities of mass consumption to the state - level agencies such as the Civil Supplies Corporation, the State Cooperative Consumer Federation etc. Some of these state - level agencies operate their own retail outlets too. At the base level there are Fair Price Shops. Retail Outlets of Central and State Level agencies and the Primary Cooperatives distribute the essential commodities to the cardholders.

Operation Process of Public Distribution System



Linkages between Hunger, Poverty & Food Security

Poverty hunger, malnutrition and mortality indicators are all linked with each other and so their answer too. Somehow, ensuring Food security to the needy is one of the possible measures to overcome today’s awful circumstances. Though India successfully achieved self - sufficiency by increasing its food production and also improved its capacity to cope with year - to - year fluctuations in food production, however it could not solve the problem of chronic household food insecurity.

Food insecurity is a complex issue having several dimensions such as, poverty, unemployment, famine, gender discrimination, equity, starvation, food and nutritional practices, human growth, political elements, natural calamities etc. Poverty has been recognized globally both as cause and consequence of food insecurity. Therefore, the

issues of food security can be broken down to production of food grains. Price policy, public procurement of food grains, buffer - stock, public distribution, and international trade on one side, population policy and planning, and overall socio - economic development policy related to income and employment generation, education, health, safe drinking water, housing and sanitation on the other.

Intensity of poverty is higher among the scheduled tribes in comparison to other communities. It is indisputable to say that deprivation of land and rights over land are most prominent in tribal areas which set a relation between the resource less poor and chronic poverty. The tribals in the forested regions are the worst sufferers of resource lessness and choice lessness besides loss of civil rights. Their continuous feeling of abandon, feeling of political and economic exclusion, strengthens an argument of violence primarily due to chronic

poverty, deprivation of entitlements for an infinite period of time. Needless to say that majority of the chronic poor living in and around the forested regions of Jharkhand is historically marginalized groups; such as Scheduled Tribes, PVTGs and poor forest dwellers, who have been living in the forest from the time immemorial.

The tribal population in the forested regions have been historically marginalized and alienated from their basic source of livelihood; land, forest and water. All these seem to have accentuated their poverty and malnutrition due to absence of people friendly policy thrusts. Even during last six decades of economic planning, the inadequate policy thrust over the years on people - centred policies has accentuated their poverty and miseries which is results into persistent hunger.

Hunger is one more aspect indicating food insecurity. Hunger is not just an expression of poverty, but a brutal face of Poverty. The triumph of food security therefore involves eliminating existing hunger and reducing the risks of future hunger. The food grain production is touching new heights every year and producing more than sufficient to feed people without relying on external support. However, sufficient food production is not the only criteria to provide food security in a country and eliminate hunger. One of the critical factors that contribute to large scale hunger is the purchasing capacity of the households for nutritious and quality food. Hunger is the uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of food or craving appetite. Poverty and Hunger is very much co - related to each other and it is the Poverty which is the principal cause of Hunger. To overcome this situation government has initiated various Social Protection Programmes and „Food Security“ is one of them. Food Security Programme has now become an important tool in the fight against Hunger. This programme focuses on promoting food security and nutrition, health, and education, particularly of children, women and people coming from marginalized section. Providing subsidized food to the needy and poor somehow help in battle to eradicate Poverty and Hunger.

Food Security Among PVTGS Of Jharkhand

Jharkhand is one of the tribal dominated states, which means „land of forest“. There is a long struggle - full odyssey has been associated with its origin, spreading over a century, which can be traced back to the early 1900s. The vision of having a separate state did not become a reality, until 2nd August, 2000, when the Parliament of India passed the Bihar Reorganization Act to create the state of Jharkhand, carving 18 districts out of Bihar to form the state of Jharkhand on 15th November 2000. On that day, it became the 28th state of India. Jharkhand, shares its border with the state of Bihar in the north; Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in the west; Odisha towards its south, and West Bengal in the eastern region. An area of 79, 714 km² makes it the 15th largest state of the country whereas the population of 32, 966, 238 people, makes it hold the 13th among the states. The industrial city Ranchi is its capital and Dumka has been designated as its sub - capital. Administratively, Jharkhand is divided into 5 divisions containing twenty - four districts. These divisions are Palamu, North Chotanagpur, South Chotanagpur and Kolhan. However, at the time of formation, the state had only 18 districts. Later, six more districts were carved out by

reorganizing these districts. These districts are Palamu, Garhwa, Latehar, Chatra, Hazaribagh, Koderma, Giridih, Ramgarh, Bokaro, Dhanbad, Lohardaga, Gumla, Simdega, Ranchi, Khunti, West Singhbhum, Saraikela kharsawn, East Singhbhum, Jamtara, Deoghar, Dumka, Pakur, Godda, and Sahebganj.

In Jharkhand Food Security Bill was mooted in 2013 and it came into force in the year 2015. Today Government has failed to combat food insecurity due to their inability to implement the 2013 Food Security Act among the PVTGs, which has become a threat to their mere existence. Most of the families belonged to PVTGs community doesn't have any type of ration cards which is necessary to have subsidized food grains. The government has initiated a scheme to provide cash sum of Six hundred Rupees per month to these community, but majority of them are not even having their Bank Account or even do not aware about this. Linking Aadhar Card with PDS has created a huge mess as still people do not have Aadhar Card. Here, the role of local representatives has become important as it is the responsibility of them to take care about these things, but unfortunately nothing such instigated by the local administration. The Planning Commission in its report had concluded that “PDS seems to have failed in serving the objective of making food grains available to the poor. If it had been successful, the average consumption levels of cereals should not have fallen, as it has consistently over the last two decades. ” To ensuring food security to the children the government of India launched Mid - Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) in, August 1995 and has now become a part of daily school routine across the country. Today Mid - Day Meal Scheme provides cooked meal to approximately 160 million school children, making it the largest school feeding programme in the world. Mid - Day Meal is an effective incentive for children and families facing difficult circumstances, especially where most families are unable to meet dietary needs of their children due to extreme poverty and food insecurity. The programme increases the benefit of schooling by promising improved nutritional status of the participating child. Considering of the performance of Mid - Day Meal schemes for these groups, piteously it is reported that still most of the children are not enrolled themselves in the schools and rest of the few are school dropout. These instances evidently demonstrated the operation of Food Security Act among these groups and how much PVTGs are benefitted from this programme. The performance of the MDMS is very poor and failed to accomplish its objective in these areas.

2. Research Methodology

The present research study will be based on primary data as well as secondary data. It will be undertaken in Jharkhand, a minerals abundant state in India. The secondary data will be collected from Publications of Planning Commission, Government of India, Directorate of Economics and Statistics. The data will be also drawn from the different websites, as well as different articles, various text books, journals and magazines and Newspapers. The data will be also gathered from statistical Abstract of India and Jharkhand, NITI Aayog, Department of Food and Public Distribution

System, Hand Book of Statistical Abstract and Annual report of MRO officers.

3. Conclusion

Poverty and Hunger both are the serious threat to Food Security. A large section of people suffers from food and nutrition insecurity in India, the worst affected groups are landless or land poor households in rural areas and especially the people belong to the PVTGs group. The food insecure people are disproportionately large in some regions of the country, such as economically backward states like Jharkhand where high incidences of poverty, malnutrition and instances of hunger deaths are accounted. To combat with these coercion government has initiated National Food Security Act in the year 2011, which comprises with programmes like Public Distribution System, Mid - day Meals Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services Programme, Annapurna Yojana, and Antyodaya Programmes to ensure physical accessibility for food but still it could not solve the problem of chronic household food insecurity. However, the extent, to which it was expected, has not at all been achieved. In Jharkhand where considerable number of tribals including nine Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups is residing, government fall short to take care of continued existence. Also, the wage employment programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Programme (MGNREGA) and Old Age Pension Scheme also not succeed to fulfil its aspiration. Reside in far - flung depressed areas, remote from roads, and the reach of administration and government programmes is weakest there. It is the biggest reason behind their deprivation. Sadly, after decades of half - hearted government intervention, the pace of Food Security in Jharkhand is dawdling. Though, it is moving but is not fast enough. There are urgent and responsible steps need to be taken to tackle with this silent - emergency.

4. Scope for The Future Study

The present study will cover the public distribution system in Jharkhand. The study will identify the perception of BPL beneficiaries regarding the services provided by PDS and their practical problems while purchasing commodities under PDS. The study will also cover PDS staffs' problems, so as to help the government formulate PDS policy to provide better services to beneficiaries.

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