

FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA THROUGH PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

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Abstract: Every living creature on this earth needs food, water, air, clothing and shelter. These are the basic needs. Apart from these there are also other needs. Rich and middle class people do not find it difficult to get it. But, the poor people may not be able to afford it easily. Especially in the country like India there are people who find it difficult to get two meals a day. Almost one third of the country's population continues to live below the poverty line and a large portion of poor live in rural areas. According to the Global Hunger Index Report 2012 of the International Food Research Institute, India ranks 97th in Global Hunger Index. India at present has a greater share of the poor around the world. Thirty years ago, India was a home to one fifth of world's poor but now it accounts for one third of the World's poor people. It means an increase in the number of poor people from 20% to 33.3%. In this regard Public Distribution System plays a very important role in the life of poor. The very purpose of the PDS is to provide food and non-food items at the subsidized prices. PDS is one of the food security measures to the people who live in below the poverty line.

Key words: Food Security, Hunger, Public Distribution System.

Introduction:

India is a developing country; here people still suffer from hunger and malnutrition. In spite of various programmes India is not able to (solve the problem of starvation) bring down the hunger ratio. Food security has a close link with the PDS. It is a Govt scheme established by the Govt of India under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, jointly managed with the State Governments in India. Its basic aim is to provide essential commodities such as rice, wheat, sugar, edible oil, and kerosene at subsidized prices.

In mid-1980 the coverage of the PDS was extended to rural areas in some states. Thus it acquired the status of a welfare programme. In 1985 an effort was made to extend subsidised food grains to 57 million persons in all tribal blocks with a network of more than 4.62 lakh Fair Price Shops (FPS) distributing commodities worth Rs.30, 000 crores annually to about 160 million families. The PDS in India was the largest distribution network of its kind in the world.

The Central Govt has divided the population in two -below the poverty line and above the poverty line (BPL & APL) BPL households are given food and non-food items at highly subsidized prices. But APL households receive them at prices closer to open market rate. Food Security is a fundamental human right. Right to food is the basic human right which is clear from Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Article 38 & 47 of our Constitution protects every Indian Citizen's right to Food Security. In this regard Govt of India passed a bill on Food Security Act.

National Food Security Act:

The Govt of India has notified the National Food Security Act, 2013 on 10th September. The main objective of this was to provide nutritional access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to the people who live in poverty in order to live a life with dignity. The Act covers 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population thus covering about 2/3 of the population. The eligible persons will be entitled to receive 5kgs of food grains per person every month at subsidised prices. The Antyodaya Anna Yojana households who are poorest of the poor will continue to receive 35kgs of food grains per household per month at Rs 3/2/1 per kg for rice/wheat/coarse grains.

What is Food Security?

Food Security means availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times. The poor households are more vulnerable to food whenever there is a problem relating to food crops. Food Security depends on the PDS. Food is something that gives energy to function and keeps us alive. Food Security means something more than getting two square meals.

Food Security has the following dimensions:

- 1) Availability of food means food production within the country.
- 2) Accessibility means food is within the reach of every person.
- 3) Affordability implies that individuals have enough money to buy sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet one's dietary needs.

Need of the study:

The main purpose of the PDS is to act as price support programme for the consumer. The basic items covered are rice, wheat, sugar, edible oil and kerosene to be sold at subsidized prices. There was a feeling that the non-poor were the beneficiaries of the PDS in large numbers, but under the new system, the non-poor sections have been kept out. The very poor are not able to make use of the benefit from PDS. Their income is not regular. They are not able to buy full ration quota because of lack of money. In many cases PDS shops are closed by the time labourers are back from their work place. As they are daily workers they cannot waste their day in waiting for the ration commodities. Officials are friendly with the dealers than to the very poor consumer for whom the whole system is supposed to work. In this regard it is the requirement to study PDS and also the Food Security System.

Importance of Food Security through PDS:

It is the sustainable development of Indian economy.

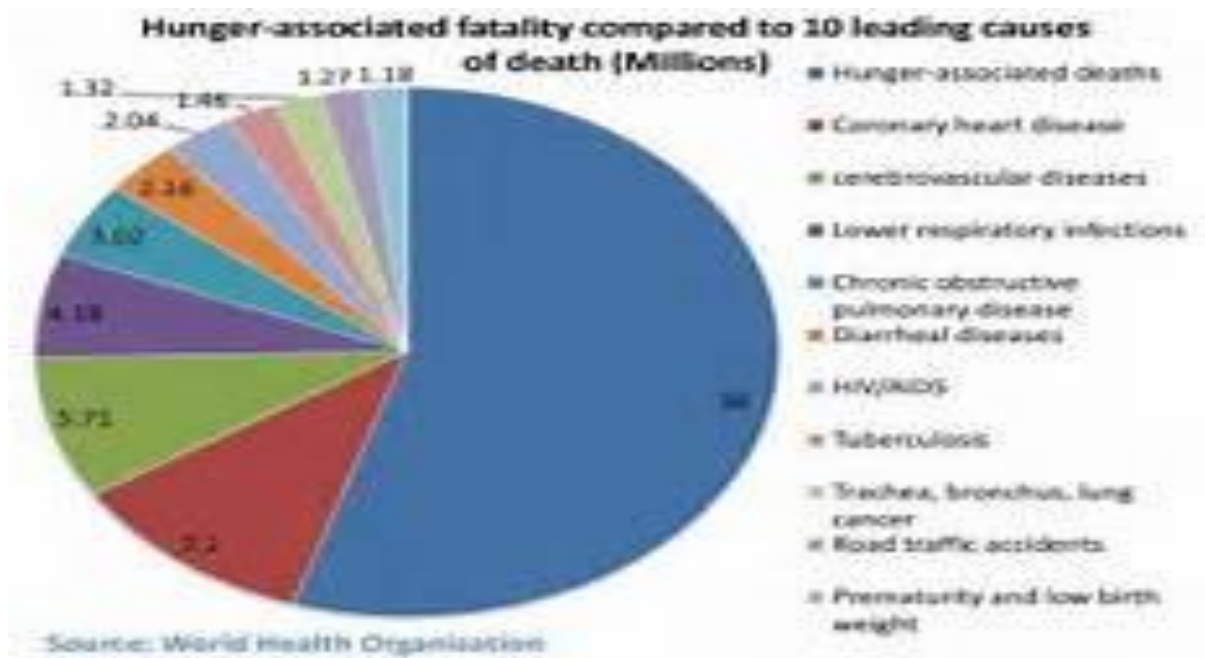
Need of Food Security in India:

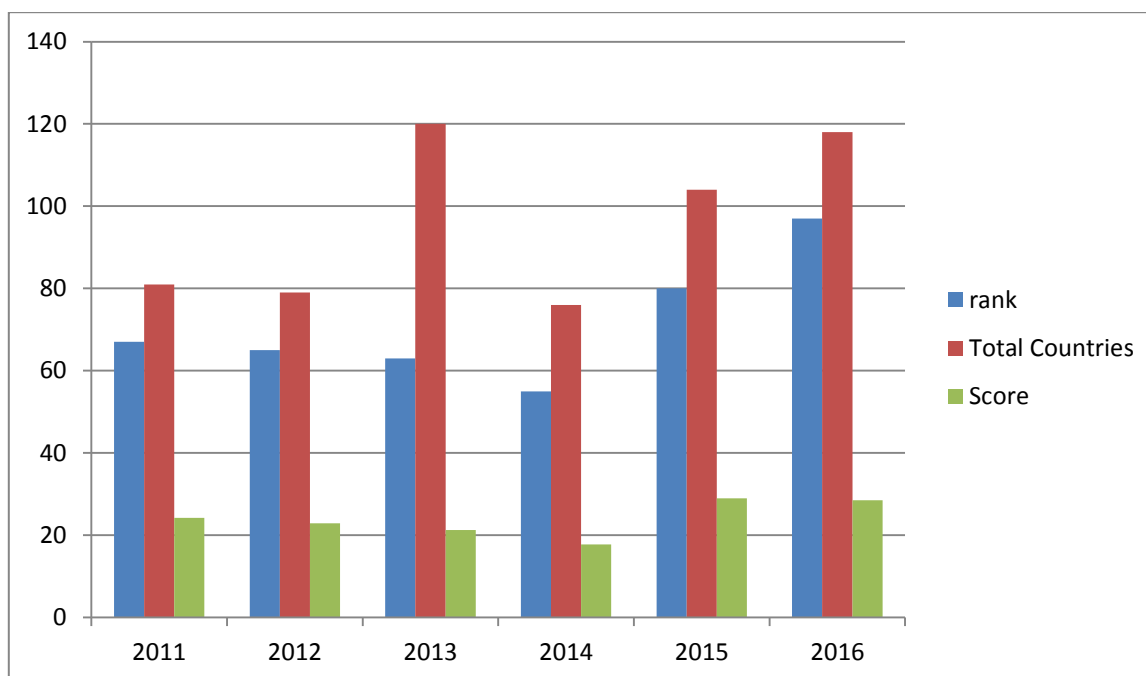
The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) classified the status of hunger into five categories-low, moderate, serious, alarming and extremely alarming. India falls into the category of alarming. That means India is still a home for the poor. In this regard food security is necessary to India.

India on Global Hunger Index

Year	Rank	Total Countries	Score
2011	67	81	24.2
2012	65	79	22.9
2013	63	120	21.3
2014	55	76	17.8
2015	80	104	29.0
2016	97	118	28.5

Source: Global Hunger Index Report IFPRI





From the table it is clear that India was ranked 67 in 2011 and 97 in 2016 with GHI of 24.2 & 28.5. This implies that hunger index has diminished to some extent. It tells that the importance of PDS, in India and how it reduces global hunger levels. Therefore, we can say that PDS is a social safety net which brings food security to the people of India.

Problems in Food Security:

- 1. Urban Population:** Most of the people shift from rural to urban areas. Result of this is unplanned growth of slums which lack in the basic health and hygiene facilities, inadequate water and sanitation facilities, insufficient housing and also food problems.
- 2. Daily wage earners:** Most of the BPL card holders are daily wage earners. If they don't have work or if they don't have money they cannot buy food items. It depends on their earnings.
- 3. Over population:** It leads to poverty, lack of education and gender inequality. Over population leads to malnutrition amongst children, lack of knowledge among mothers regarding nutrition. Breast feeding and parenting is another area of concern.
- 4. Unmonitored nutrition programmes:** Even though Govt has planned many nutritional programmes they are not properly implemented. It takes lot of time to bring it to practice.
- 5. Climate Change:** Most of the people in India are agriculturists. They depend on monsoon for their irrigation and for other factors. Change of monsoon affects their cultivation. They won't get profit for the money that they invest. They have to take loans. When they won't have any profit they will not be in a position to pay back the loans. In order to come out from this they end their life. Ultimately the burden remains in the hands of his family. In this way the struggle continues.
- 6. Land Fragmentation:** People in India have their agricultural land in different places. Some have piece of lands. Most of them have used the land for non-agricultural purposes.

Food Security through PDS:

PDS was started during the time of scarcity of food to manage food supplies at affordable prices. PDS works under the joint responsibility of the Central and State Govt. The Central Govt through Food Corporation of India takes care of storage, transportation and bulk allocation of food grains to the State Govts. State Govts take the responsibility of allocation within the State, identification of eligible families, and issue of ration cards, distribution of food grains through FPS and supervising the functions of FPS. It distributes commodities such as pulses, edible oil, iodized salt, and spices etc. as per their requirements.

Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS):

The Govt of India launched the TPDS in June 1997 it focused on the poor.

The BPL families were identified which included the poor and vulnerable sections of the society such as landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, rural artisans/craftsmen such as potters, tappers, weavers, black smith, carpenters etc in the rural areas and slum dwellers and persons earning their livelihood on daily basis in the informal sector like potters rickshaw pullers, cart pullers, fruit sellers on the pavement etc. in urban areas.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana:

It was introduced in December 2000 for the poorest of the poor families, it covered nearly 1 crore families. This scheme expanded thrice by adding 50 lakh additional families in June 2003, August 2004 and May 2005. Thus it covers 2.5 crore beneficiaries. State Govt has the responsibility to identify AAY and BPL households.

The following criteria were being adopted to identify Antyodaya households:

1. Landless agriculture labourers, marginal farmers, rural artisans/crafts men such as potters, tanners, weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters, slum dwellers and persons earning their livelihood on daily basis in the informal sector like porters, coolies, rickshaw pullers, hand crafts, fruit and flower sellers, snake charmers, rag pickers, cobblers, destitutes and other similar categories in both rural and urban areas.
2. Households headed by widows or terminally ill persons/disabled persons/persons aged 60 years or more with no assured means of subsistence or societal support.

3. Widows or terminally ill persons or disabled persons aged 60 years or more or single women or single men with no family or societal support or assured means to subsistence
4. All primitive tribal households.
5. All HIV positive persons.

Issue of Food Grains:

Since 1997, the food grains for BPL families increased from 10 kg to 35 kg per family per month. 10kg to 20 kg per month with effect from 1.04.2000. The scale of issue under BPL & AAY was revised to 35 kg per family per month with effect from 01.04.2002. APL families were being allocated food grains between 15 to 35 kg per family per month, depending on availability of food grains stock and past off take.

Other welfare schemes (OWS):

Mid-day meal Scheme:

It was launched on 15.08.1995 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. It was started with a view to enhance enrolment, retention, attendance and to improve nutritional levels among students in primary schools.

Wheat based Nutrition Programme (WBNP):

This scheme is implemented by the Ministry of women and child development. It provides nutritious food to children below 6 years of age.

Scheme for supply of food grains to Welfare Institutions (5% of BPL Allocation) and SC/ST/OBC Hostels:

It provides food to charitable institutions such as beggar homes, nariniketans and other similar welfare institutions not covered under TPDS or under any other welfare schemes. This was introduced by the Department of Food & Public Distribution request received from the State/UT Governments.

SC/ST/OBC hostel schemes were introduced in October 1994. The residents of the hostels having 2/3rd students belonging to SC/ST/OBC are eligible to get 15kg food grains per resident per month.

Annapurna Scheme:

This scheme was launched in 2000-01 by the Ministry of Rural Development. It provides food grains to the senior citizens of 65 years of age or above who are not getting pension under the National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS). They are provided 10 kgs of food grains per person per month free of cost.

Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for empower of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)-SABLA:

This scheme was launched on 19.11.2010 by merging two schemes namely Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls(NPAG)and Kishorishakti Yojana (KSY) . Implemented in 200 districts across the country. This scheme aims at girls of 11-18 years for improvement of their health status, nutrition and upgrading various skills. It also aims at equipping the girls on family welfare, health, hygiene etc. Food grains under the scheme for nutrition is at 100 grams of food grains per beneficiaries per day for 300 days in a year.

Conclusion:

PDS plays a very important role in ensuring food security to the people of India. To some extent it helps in eradication of poverty. Through various schemes the Govt wants to uproot poverty. But, it has its own unsolved problems and gradually to some extent they may be able to solve some of the problems. When hunger index comes down in India, automatically there will be growth in other sectors also. Different schemes that are introduced by the Govt should be implemented and its benefit should be enjoyed by those people those who receive it.

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