



Food Security and Government Initiatives: A case of Public Distribution System (PDS) in Bihar

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The paper entitled 'Food Security and Government Initiatives : A case of Public Distribution System (PDS) in Bihar' is divided into four sections. Section one deals introduction, Section two deals about food security in India, Section three describes Government initiatives both central and State Government about food security and Section four analyzes the conclusion and suggestions of food security.

Key words : Food Security, PDS.

Introduction

The world is home to over a billion undernourished people and as many as 8.4 million children and 300,000 women die every year because of malnutrition in developing countries. The situation is particularly grave in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Despite the immensity of the problem and the fact that reducing hunger is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), hunger and food security receive less attention than poverty reduction from both a policy and research perspective. Food security is not just a matter of the availability of food, but also of the access of households and individuals to sufficient nutritious food. The absorption of food as nutrition in the body is further mediated by access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation facilities. Consequently, food security is analyzed along the axes of availability, access and absorption. The importance of entitlements in food security is further underlined by the Supreme Court's judgments validating the Right to Food. As a signatory to the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Government of India and all state governments have an obligation to reduce by half the proportion of people suffering from hunger by 2015.

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) earlier collaborated in analysing the food insecurity situation in different states in the country. Using chosen indicators to map the relative standing of states with regard to food security, the MSSRF and WFP prepared the Food Insecurity Atlas of Rural India in 2001. This was followed by the Food Insecurity Atlas of Urban India in 2002. The third in the series, the Atlas of Sustainability of Food Security was launched in 2004. India accounts for 2.1 million (21 per cent) of a total of 9.7 million children dying globally before they reach the age of five. This is despite the fact that under-five mortality has declined by 34 per cent between 1990 and 2006. A study conducted by Save the Children, which compares under-five mortality in a country to per capita income, shows that India lags far behind its poorer neighbors like Bangladesh and Nepal, when it comes to reducing child deaths. A new Wealth and Survival Index, which is part of the study, has ranked 41 countries on the criterion of how well they use their resources to boost child survival rates. While Bangladesh and Nepal are listed in the top ten performers, India stands at a low 16th in the index.

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Definitions and Significance of Food Security

In the 1970s, food security was understood as the 'availability at all times of adequate world food supply of basic foodstuffs. The World Food Summit (1974) defined food security as 'availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices. This was also the understanding at the time of the first UN Report of the World Food Conference held in 1975 in Rome. But the 1981 publication of Amartya Sen's 'Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation' brought forward a new understanding of the problem of hunger or food security. Rather than just the 'availability' of food, Sen emphasized 'access' to food through what he called 'entitlement's combination of what one can produce, exchange in the market plus state or other socially provided supplies. What Sen posited is that availability or supply of food does not itself create entitlements for food. In a sense, Sen's emphasis on entitlements is similar to Keynes' notion of 'effective demand'. Both entitlement and effective demand are quite different from need. Since Keynes was dealing with a fully capitalist market economy, with only two classes, employers and workers, all effective demand was related to monetary income. But Sen is dealing with a 'mixed economy' with at least three classes, employers, workers and peasants or other own-account producers. For those who produce food, part, if not all, of their entitlement is due to their own production. This portion of the consumption of food is not mediated by the market. Consequently, this is not captured by the market-based notion of effective demand.

The definition of food security adopted at the World Food Summit of 1996 is comprehensive and widely accepted 'Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life'. Food, of course, is not an end in itself. Food is consumed for nutrition. Instead of focusing attention on the commodity, one can look at the objective for which food is consumed, that is providing nutrition for the body. The purpose of nutrition itself is not just to survive, but to lead a healthy and meaningful life- to be in the state one wants to be in (well-being) and to do various things one wants to do.

Food Security in India

Rural India achieved self-sufficiency in food grain production in the 70's and has sustained it since then; but the achievement of food grain security at the national level did not percolate down to households, resulting into high chronic food insecurity among the rural poor. In this context the National Food Security Bill, 2011 is a revolutionary initiatives of the Government, raising hope for the millions of hungry Indians residing across six lakh villages of this country.

Salient Features of the National Food Security Bill

- ♦ Subsidised grains for upto 75 per cent of rural population and up to 50 per cent of urban population Beneficiaries divided into priority and general categories.
- ♦ 7 kg. of grain per person per month for priority households at prices not exceeding Rs. 3 / 2 / 1 for 1 kg. of rice / wheat / coarse grains.

- ♦ Not less than 3 kg. of grain per person per month for general household at prices not exceeding half the minimum support price (MSP) for wheat and coarse grains and not exceeding half the derived MSP (recalculated MSP after de-husking of paddy) of rice.
- ♦ Nutritional support for children and lactating mothers.
- ♦ Monthly allowance of Rs. 1,000 over six months for lactating mothers.
- ♦ One free meal everyday for the destitute. Affordable meals at community kitchens for the homeless.
- ♦ Two free meals a day for up to three months for the disaster-hit Financial implication estimated at Rs. 94,973 cr. a year.

According to Prof. Jean Dreze “Hunger is almost a hidden national emergency”. The following facts indicates it.

- i. 20% is the prevalence of calorie under-nourishment in India.
- ii. the number of Sub-Saharan countries better off than India in terms of food security. We are even worse off than Pakistan.
- iii. African nations - Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya and Sudan - have far lower per capita income than India's but manage hunger better (as per rankings).
- iv. 410 million the number of people who are poor and food insecure in just eight Indian states- more than in the 26 sub-sahara African countries, according to an Oxford University report
- v. Serious : The level of hunger in India across all states; there is not a single state with low or even moderate levels.
- vi. The food bowl Punjab, India's best performing state, falls in “serious” category and ranks behind Vietnam and Saudi Arabia.
- vii. Madhya Pradesh, India's worst state, Gujarat, Chhatisgarh and Haryana are worse off than Sudan.
- viii. Bihar and Jharkhand rank lower than Zimbabwe and Haiti. Critics say the Food Security Bill introduced in Parliament, would further burden our public finances. But others see it as a hope for millions of food secure Indians.

Challenges of Food Security in India

A new approach and strategy would require a multi pronged approach that addresses multiple aspects such as agricultural and rural development. The multi pronged strategies related to :

- ♦ Sustainable management of natural resources
- ♦ Removal of trade barriers
- ♦ Equitable access to land adoption of modern and new technology and finance
- ♦ Social sector and other investment on health, education, and infrastructure
- ♦ Improved governance

Qualitative aspects of Food Security in India

The qualitative aspects of food security relate to :

- ♦ According to Global Hunger Index, 2009-10 India ranks 96 in a group of 119 developing countries.
- ♦ According to the World Food Programme, nearly 50 in India.
- ♦ About 35 percent of India's population over 350 million is food insecure, consuming less than 80 percent of the minimum energy requirement.
- ♦ Nearly 9 out of 10 pregnant women between 15-40 years are malnourished and anemic.

- ♦ Anemia in pregnant woman causes 20, percent of infant mortality.
- ♦ India contributed 21.6 percent of total deaths in the world below 5 years age group.
- ♦ Mal nutrition accounts for 50 percent of under 5 years old deaths.
- ♦ About one third of under weight children under five live in India.

Quantitative aspects of Food security in India

Because of chronic food shortage that the country faced in the year following independence, the focus of food policy was to achieve self sufficiency. After the third plan implementation with stress in Green Revolution Strategy, the food grain production increased rapidly, this has enabled the economy to overcome the problem of food grain shortage and build up large stock of food grains to counter the scarcity condition. India achieved a self sufficiency in food grains in the 1970s and has sustained it since then. It improved its capacity to cope with year-to-year fluctuations in food production by building up large buffer stocks through the agency of FCI (Food Corporation of India) and supplying these stocks to the people through the PDS. During some of the recent years, the buffer stocks considerably exceeded the minimum norms causing the problems of 'excess stocks'.

The Food Security Bill promises to provide for food and nutritional security by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices. It promises 75 percent of rural population and 50 percent of urban households the right to 7 kg food grains per person per month, at Rs.3 per kg for rice, Rs.2 per kg for wheat and Rs.1 per kg for coarse grains to the priority beneficiaries. Food Security is not a stand alone phenomenon. There has to be availability, access, and affordability of food grains. The government has to guarantee Right to Food for the vast numbers of people who still live in hunger. This would mean increasing the production and productivity of agriculture, creating efficient infrastructure for distribution of food grains and ensuring that the needy have easy access to food grains.

Food security has always been one of the major developmental priorities for rural India since the inception of the country's five year planning process. Rural India achieved self-sufficiency in food grain production in the 70's and has sustained it since then; but the achievement of food grain security at the national level did not percolate down to households, resulting into high chronic food insecurity among the rural poor. In this context the National Food Security Bill, 2011 is a revolutionary initiative of the Government, raising hope for the millions of hungry Indians residing across six lakh villages of this country. Estimates suggest that 68 per cent of the country's 1.2 billion population will get a legal entitlement for food grains after the Bill is enacted. So, it is needless to comment that the right to food Act will be a significant contribution on the part of the government towards humane and accountable governance; it will enable the government to redeem its pledge to attain true freedom by exiling hunger from every home. In a nation where mammoth wealth and intense destitution have co-existed for years, a law that would bind governments to guarantee that no man, woman or child sleeps hungry, could be momentous.

Government Initiatives

The central and state government have launched a number of schemes and programmes that are aimed at enhancing food security in state. Some of them are recent and it is too early to see their impact, while some have been under implementation for some time.

Increasing Food Production: The National Food Security Mission

The dismal rate of growth in the agricultural sector in the country has been a cause for concern - the sector grew at a meagre rate of 1.8 per cent per annum during the 1990s. This has been coupled with rising international prices as well occasional wheat imports, bringing into question the food security of the country. With a view to increasing the rate of agricultural growth to 4 percent, the government has launched the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) entirely funded by the Central government, with a total estimated outlay of over Rs. 50,000 million. The programme specifically aims at increasing the production and productivity of three crops: rice, wheat and pulses. The objective of the mission is to increase the production of rice by 10 million tonnes, wheat by 8 million tonnes and pulses by 2 million tonnes, by the end of the Eleventh Plan.

Rural Road Connectivity

The road infrastructure is essential not only for facilitating movement of goods and people among important urban centres where production activities are concentrated, but for providing arterial connection among all geographical areas as well.

Recent Initiatives

‘The state government has, however, recently taken up quite an ambitious road upgradation programme. This is expected to bring about a major improvement in road infrastructure over the next three years. Under the Rashtrya Sam Vikas Yojana (Development and Reform Facility), all major roads have been upgraded so as to provide them with four-laned, two-laned and intermediate lane status. In respect of rural connectivity, all-weather roads will be provided to all villages over the next 3-8 years, which should aid in improving food security in the rural areas. The proposed plan envisages provision of all-weather rural roads within the following time frame:

- (a) All villages with a population of more than a thousand will be provided with such roads within three years.
- (b) Villages with a population between 500 and 900 will have such roads within five years.
- (c) Villages with a population below 500 will be provided *pucca (permanent)* roads within the subsequent three years.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

One of the major developments in recent years as far as rural connectivity is concerned is the introduction of the Prime Minister’s Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) on 25th December 2000 to provide all-weather access to unconnected habitations. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) is a 100 per cent Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

Bharat Nirman: Rural Roads

Bharat Nirman is a plan for action in rural infrastructure that started in 2005 and will end in 2009. ‘Under the scheme, action is proposed in the areas of irrigation, roads, rural housing, rural water supply, rural electrification and rural telecommunication connectivity, in partnership with the state governments and the PRIs.

Improving Access to Food

Improving access, the results of our analysis show, comes about through improvement on several fronts. These include:

- a) Enhancing access to food provided in government schemes;
- b) Improving wages, incomes and employment opportunities; and

- c) Improving the position of the most marginal sections including women, and ST/SC communities.

Performance of Mahatama Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA)

Providing income security by generating employment for poorer strata is one of the powerful means of providing food security since the poor families spend a substantial share of their budget on food. In this context, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) which was devised as a public works programme by the Government of India under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA, 2005), provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment in a year in the rural areas at a minimum wage rate prescribed in the state. Thus, it has a key role to play in improving access to assured employment to those who volunteer to take up unskilled manual work. This can improve access to income and thereby ensure better levels of food security.

Improving Gender Relations

The result of our analysis shows that female literacy in rural areas is the most significant factor determining food security of the rural population. The rural female literacy is pathetically low in Bihar. It is imperative that girls' literacy be prioritized and all barriers to their access to education be effectively tackled, taking care to see that girls from the poorest and most marginalized communities get priority treatment. This should be coupled with the provision of quality education and ownership of land in land distribution schemes.

Scheduled Castes

Another policy implication from the indicators used for enhancing food security is the betterment of the plight of the vulnerable populations, Scheduled Castes. Most of the food insecure districts in Bihar are dominated by a higher proportion of Scheduled Castes who form the most vulnerable section. They are also largely landless.

Agricultural Labourers

One important category of the food insecure in Bihar is agricultural labourers. A large proportion of them are also likely to be dalits. Agricultural wages and the number of days of employment can be influenced by a number of factors - including transfer of land and resources to the landless and creation of other avenues of employment. The object of distributing land to the landless is not one of creating "viable" farms, but of enabling a reduction of food insecurity among the currently landless. In the current scenario where there is a lot of migration from the countryside, there could be scope for a market-mediated land reform programme.

Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDMS)

Serving of Mid-day Meals (MDM) in the schools is a very potent means of enhancing nutrition levels of the children and goes to improve food security. The scheme was started in Bihar in January 2005 and is applicable to all elementary schools under the Bihar Government. The nutritional objective of the programme acquires a great significance in Bihar since 55.5 percent of children are malnourished according to NFHS-III, 2005-06. About 9.8 million children in primary and upper primary schools in the age group 6-14 years are currently being benefited by the Scheme. Initially, foodgrains were lifted by the PDS dealers from SFC godowns and then supplied to the schools. But in view of certain evils of this system which came to light, Block Level Education Officers have been directly entrusted this responsibility.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

The ICDS Scheme was launched in 1975 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with one of its core aim to improve the nutritional and health status of children below the age of six years and pregnant and lactating mothers; Launched in 1975, the programme has gradually increased from 33 projects to 7073 projects in 2009, catering to about 87.3 million beneficiaries through a network of about 1 million Anganwadi centres.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana

In order to make TPDS more focused and targeted towards the poorest section of population, the “Antyodaya Anna Yojana” (AAY) was launched in December, 2000. Initially AAY contemplated identification of one crore poorest of the poor families from amongst the BPL families covered under TPDS within the States and providing them food grains at a highly subsidised rate of Rs. 2/ per kg for wheat and Rs. 3/- per kg for rice. The AAY Scheme has been expanded in subsequent years and presently it is covering 2.5 crore households.

National Food Security Mission (NFSM)

Centrally Sponsored Scheme on National Food Security Mission has been launched in the country to enhance the production of rice, wheat and pulses by 10, 8 and 2 million tonnes respectively by the end of the 11th Plan.

Public Distribution System (PDS) in India and Bihar

PDS has been considered as the most important food based safety net introduced by the government of India. The basic objectives of the PDS in India is to provide essential consumer goods at cheap and subsidized price to the consumers so as to insulate them from the impact of rising prices of these commodities and maintain the minimum nutritional status of our population. In addition to food grains, PDS has also been used in India for the distribution of edible oils, sugar, coal, kerosene and cloth. The most important item covered under PDS in India have been rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene. Together these four items have accounted for 86 sources of protein for the poor, have a share of less than 0.2 percent in total PDS sale. PDS in India covers the whole population as no means of direct targeting are employed. PDS distributes commodities worth more than Rs 30,000 cores annually to about 160 million families and is perhaps the largest network of its kind in the world.

At present, the PDS provides subsidised grains to around 6.5 crore poor families and 11.5 crore above poverty line households. According to one estimate, PDS suffers from heavy leakages (of up to 40 percent). Many state governments fail to pick up the allocated food monthly from the Central Pool and distribute it to the seriously needy. Foodgrain procurement from the farmers too is ineffective. On the global front, the high cost of fertilizers resulting from the prevailing prices of crude is threatening to slow the global food production. Increasing use of food crops for biofuels, extreme weather conditions, climate change, and increased volume of trading in commodity futures markets have all contributed to higher food prices. No doubt, the government is working on improving procurement infrastructure and optimization of storage and transportation cost and losses. It is also considering committed transportation system for speedy movement of foodgrain to consuming states from procurement centres. A move to effect direct payments to farmers to encourage procurement is also being adopted. The central government wants the states to check issuance of bogus ration cards, digitise PDS and ensure grains reach only genuine beneficiaries. These measures are expected to help the government reduce its current

food subsidy burden at Rs.63, 000 crore, which is likely to go up substantially once the right to food law is implemented. The food subsidy - when the proposed Act comes into play - is expected to be over Rs. one lakh crore. Now, we are going to discuss about public distribution system (PDS) in Bihar.

The Public Distribution System (PDS)' is the largest food distribution system of its type in the world. Four essential commodities (wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene oil) are distributed through PDS outlets that are run by licensed dealers for targeted beneficiaries. With an objective of -enhancing warehousing capacity, 423 godowns are now being constructed by the state government at the block level. The total capacity of these godowns will be 2.84 lakh tonnes. These godowns also be utilized for rabi and kharif procurement programme in the state. There are 41,912 PDS dealers in the state whose social background is presented in Table-1.

Table :1
Overview of Public Distribution System (PDS) Dealerships

| Social Background of PDS Dealers | No. of PDS Outlets | Percentage Share |
|--|--------------------|------------------|
| Scheduled Cast | 8201 | 19.57 |
| Scheduled Tribes | 336 | 0.80 |
| Backward Caste | 13943 | 33.27 |
| Extremely Backward Caste | 2672 | 6.38 |
| Muslim | 2957 | 7.06 |
| Women | 2925 | 6.98 |
| Women Self Help Groups | 18 | 0.04 |
| Helper Samiti | -- | -- |
| Co-operative Samiti (Ex Army Personnel | 764 | 1.82 |
| Handicaped | 106 | 0.25 |
| General | 9990 | 23.84 |
| Others | -- | -- |
| Total | 41912 | 100.00 |

Source : Department of Food and Consumer Protection, GOB

The share of backward and extremely backward castes among the PDS dealers is 33.3 percent and 6 percent respectively, that of SCs is 19.6 percent, and general castes 23.8 percent: The district wise distribution of PDS dealers by the social categories is presented in Table -2. It is also observed that the share of BCs, EBCs and SCs among the PDS dealers insubstantial in all the districts.

The entire programme of PDS has 3 components - BPL, Antyoday and Annapurna scheme. Under the BPL scheme, 25 kgs of rice and 10 kgs of wheat are provided to each family per month. For extremely poor BPL families which are covered by the Antyoday scheme, the quota is 21 kgs price at the rate of Rs 2 per kg and 14 kgs of wheat at the rate of Rs. 3 per kg. Finally, under Annapurna scheme, about 1.6 lakh homeless senior citizens in the state are provided with 4 kgs of rice and 6 kgs of wheat free of cost. The central government allocates food gains to the state for 65.23 lakhs BPL families, whereas the state government survey has revealed that the total number of BPL families is 1.35 crores. Since there is a shortfall in supply of food grains from central government, the state government has decided to provide 25 kgs of food grains to each family, instead of 35 kgs per family per month.

Table : 2
Districtwise Distribution of Public Distribution System (PDS) Dealers by Their Social Background in Bihar

| Districts | No. of PDS Dealers | | Percentage of Dealers in August, 2011 belonging to | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|--|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------|------------------|--------|-------|
| | Census 2001 * | August 2011 | Upper Castes | Backward Caste | Extremely Backward Castes | Scheduled Castes/ Tribes | Muslims | Women/ Women SHG | Others | Total |
| Patna | 2904 | 2634 | 15.8 | 44.4 | 5.5 | 19.5 | 1.8 | 9.8 | 3.2 | 100 |
| Nalanda | 1324 | 1061 | 14.7 | 40.5 | 7.4 | 18.9 | 4.3 | 10 | 4.2 | 100 |
| Bho' pur | 1247 | 1008 | 61.7 | 0 | 0 | 25.6 | 5.3 | 3 | 4.5 | 100 |
| Buxar | 766 | 636 | 16.8 | 36.8 | 6.9 | 24.4 | 7.1 | 6.8 | 1.3 | 100 |
| Rohtas | 1360 | 722 | 65.7 | 0 | 0 | 22.4 | 3 | 6.1 | 2.8 | 100 |
| Kaimur | 687 | 1325 | 28.1 | 37.2 | 7.8 | 17.4 | 1.5 | 6.4 | 1.6 | 100 |
| Gay a | 1931 | 1817 | 12.5 | 35.5 | 3.6 | 37.8 | 4.7 | 4 | 1.9 | 100 |
| Jehanabad | 511 | 1130 | 31.2 | 27 | 9 | 20.4 | 7 | 4.1 | 1.3 | 100 |
| Arwal | 310 | 510 | 27.6 | 23.5 | 8.8 | 22 | 4.7 | 11.4 | 2 | 100 |
| Nawada | 983 | 288 | 14.6 | 46.9 | 2.4 | 24 | 0 | 6.9 | 5.2 | 100 |
| Aurangabad | 1096 | 888 | 28 | 41.4 | 3.9 | 18.9 | 3.4 | 0 | 4.3 | 100 |
| Saran | 1774 | 2451 | 37.3 | 24.1 | 5.3 | 15.3 | 3.1 | 13.3 | 1.7 | 100 |
| Siwan | 1461 | 1589 | 30.6 | 33.6 | 5.3 | 14.6 | 8.4 | 5.2 | 2.2 | 100 |
| Gopalganj | 1161 | 1163 | 32.7 | 29.8 | 4.1 | 15.3 | 5.8 | 8.9 | 3.4 | 100 |
| West Champaran | 1668 | 1990 | 34 | 30.2 | 9.4 | 23.7 | 0 | 2.7 | 0 | 100 |
| East Champarran | 2128 | 926 | 15.7 | 40.6 | 8.6 | 19.1 | 7.6 | 6.4 | 2.1 | 100 |
| Muzaffarpur | 2047 | 312 | 35.3 | 28.2 | 1.3 | 12.2 | 4.5 | 5.1 | 13.5 | 100 |
| Sitamarhi | 14,45 | 1877 | 15.8 | 31.4 | 8.5 | 22.5 | 13.1 | 6.9 | 1.8 | 100 |
| Sheohar | 276 | 2194 | 26.5 | 34.4 | 7.6 | 19 | 7.2 | 4.1 | 1.2 | 100 |
| Vaishali | 1471 | 1351 | 23.7 | 42.9 | 3.8 | 18.9 | 1.7 | 5.9 | 3.2 | 100 |
| Darbhanaa | 1792 | 1346 | 33 | 20.8 | 10.9 | 14.9 | 12 | 7.3 | 1.1 | 100 |
| Madhubani | 1908 | 1337 | 23.5 | 39.2 | 3.4 | 25.1 | 1.6 | 5.3 | 1.9 | 100 |
| Samasti iuur | 1813 | 1449 | 21.5 | 39.5 | 0 | 24.2 | 9.1 | 4.9 | 0.7 | 100 |
| Begusarai | 1260 | 686 | 17.3 | 41 | 3.2 | 22.4 | 9.8 | 3.8 | 2.5 | 100 |
| Plunger | 667 | 717 | 13.8 | 48.5 | 13.1 | 13.8 | 9.9 | 0.8 | 0 | 100 |
| Sheikhpura | 294 | 505 | 11.5 | 49.7 | 7.5 | 17.4 | 5.5 | 6.7 | 1.6 | 100 |
| Lakhisarai | 447 | 1250 | 11.8 | 38.3 | 7 | 22.3 | 11.4 | 8 | 1.1 | 100 |
| Jamui | 758 | 1020 | 11.2 | 32.1 | 0 | 19 | 22.6 | 13.3 | 1.8 | 100 |
| Khagaria | 691 | 687 | 2.5 | 17.2 | 7.3 | 15.9 | 38.9 | 16.6 | 1.7 | 100 |
| Bhagalpur | 1372 | 1015 | 10.8 | 32.2 | 6.4 | 21.9 | 21.9 | 5.7 | 1.1 | 100 |
| Banka | 859 | 1335 | 13 | 37.7 | 8.5 | 19 | 10.6 | 7.9 | 3.4 | 100 |
| Saharsa | 821 | 874 | 17.8 | 37.3 | 10.2 | 15.9 | 9.3 | 7.4 | 2.1 | 100 |
| Supaul | 930 | 668 | 16.6 | 45.8 | 11.1 | 9 | 5.1 | 9 | 3.4 | 100 |
| Madhepura | 818 | 394 | 38.8 | 25.9 | 13.2 | 17.3 | 0 | 3.3 | 1.5 | 100 |
| Purnea | 1387 | 1122 | 22.2 | 25.5 | 5.3 | 29.6 | 4.3 | 12.7 | 0.4 | 100 |
| Kishanganj | 710 | 724 | 26.8 | 31.4 | 8.7 | 22.7 | 4.4 | 3.9 | 2.2 | 100 |
| Akraria | 1164 | 642 | 10.6 | 35.8 | 17.1 | 16.7 | 4.2 | 14.8 | 0.8 | 100 |
| Katihar | 1306 | 269 | 30.5 | 36.1 | 8.9 | 12.6 | 3.3 | 6.3 | 2.2 | 100 |
| Bihar | 48451 | 44546 | 23.8 | 33.3 | 6.4 | 20.4 | 7.1 | 7 | 2.1 | 100 |

According to 2001 census number of allotted PDS dealers

Source : Department of Food and Consumer Protection, GOB.

The operational details of PDS in Bihar for the years 2001-02 to 2010-11 are presented in Table - 3.

Table: 3
Working of Public Distribution System (PDS) (2001-02 to 2010-11)

| Year | BPL | | | | | | Antyoday | | | | | |
|---------|-----------|---------|--------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| | Wheat | | | Rice | | | Wheat | | | Rice | | |
| | Allotment | Lifting | Lifting Percentage | Allotment | Lifting | Lifting Percentage | Allotment | Lifting | Lifting Percentage | Allotment | Lifting | Lifting Percentage |
| 2001-02 | 1331.5 | 310.6 | 23.3 | 887.7 | 66.2 | 7.5 | 90 | 68.8 | 76.4 | 60 | 46.5 | 77.5 |
| 2002-03 | 1331.5 | 401.6 | 30.2 | 887.7 | 45.1 | 5.1 | 252 | 152.6 | 60.6 | 168 | 98.1 | 58.4 |
| 2003-04 | 1331.5 | 603.5 | 45.3 | 887.7 | 59.6 | 6.7 | 252 | 243 | 96.4 | 168 | 157.1 | 93.5 |
| 2004-05 | 1331.5 | 672.5 | 50.5 | 887.7 | 132.3 | 14.9 | 252 | 237.1 | 94.1 | 168 | 155.1 | 92.3 |
| 2005-06 | 1148.9 | 524.0 | 45.6 | 1001 | 147.5 | 14.7 | 273 | 258.4 | 94.6 | 182 | 166.6 | 91.5 |
| 2006-07 | 623.0 | 227.4 | 36.5 | 1313.3 | 184.4 | 14 | 275.3 | 238.3 | 86.5 | 386.8 | 300.4 | 77.7 |
| 2007-08 | 479.3 | 273.8 | 57.1 | 1198.2 | 479.6 | 40 | 408 | 366.6 | 89.9 | 612 | 514 | 84 |
| 2008-09 | 447.7 | 289.9 | 64.8 | 1272.1 | 470.3 | 37 | 408 | 322.4 | 79 | 612 | 461.5 | 75.4 |
| 2009-10 | 447.7 | 410.3 | 91.6 | 1272.1 | 741.6 | 58.3 | 408 | 385.4 | 94.5 | 612 | 543.2 | 88.8 |
| 2010-11 | 438.6 | 816.8 | 186.2 | 1258.4 | 1202.6 | 95.6 | 417.1 | 408.6 | 97.9 | 625.7 | 595.2 | 94.1 |

Source : Department of Food and Consumer Protection, GOB.

In the past, the state governments used to lift a small proportion of total allotment because of various administrative problems in the system. But this problem has now been solved and the lifting percentage has continuously increased over the years. For example, for BPL households, the lifting percentage for wheat was less than 50 percent upto 2006-07, but it has increased substantially thereafter to reach 91.3 in 2009-10. In 2010-11 to supplement the allocation for the central government, the state government has also procured foodgrains from the market, which made the lifting percent exceed 100 percent. In case of rice under BPL scheme, the lifting percentage earlier was even lower than lifting percentage of wheat, but it has also gone up substantially in 2009-10 (58.3 percent) and 2010-11 (95.6 percent). Since food grains are highly subsidized under Antyodaya, the lifting percent for wheat and rice were relatively higher even in the past. But during 2009-10 and 2010-11, these percentages have become even higher and very close to 100 percent.

Since the production of food grains by the farmers in different districts varies considerably, the demand for PDS food grains also show variations across the districts. This is indicated by lifting percentages for wheat and rice under BPL, Antyodaya and Annapurna schemes. It has been shown in table-4.

In Table - 4. These lifting percentage figures are provided for 2009-10 and 2010-11. As an indicator of the demand for PDS of food grains, one may consider the lifting percentage of wheat and rice for BPL scheme. This percentage was the highest in Aurangabad (89.4 percent) for wheat and in Khagaria (89.5 percent) for rice. The district with the lowest lifting percentage was Madhubani (21.4 percent) both for wheat and 41.0 percent for rice.

For consumer protection right in Bihar, the State Food and Consumer Protection Department has started a toll-free consumer helpline number in February 2011. The consumers can

lodge complaints and provide suggestions about their problems through this number. The consumers can also call on the number and get advice from the experts about whom to approach for the redressed if their grievances. The state government has also taken every possible step to curb leakage from PDS at the grass root level, by holding camps and video-recording of entire process of coupon distribution for 1.45 crore BPL families. The camps were held at panchayat and block levels from June 1 to June 15, 2011.

Table : 4
Districtwise Lifting Percentage for Whea and Rice Under BPL, Antodaya and Annapurna

| Districts | Wheat | | | | | | Rice | | | | | |
|----------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | BPL | | Antodaya | | Annapurna | | BPL | | Antodaya | | Annapurna | |
| | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 |
| Patna | 40.6 | 86.4 | 101.4 | 96.5 | 125 | 66.2 | 71.8 | 85.9 | 97.6 | 128.3 | 125 | 67.9 |
| Nalanda | 38.4 | 60.7 | 99.5 | 78.5 | 12.3 | 40.5 | 39.1 | 67.5 | 86.6 | 79.9 | 15.3 | 38.9 |
| Bhojpur | 19 | 54.8 | 94 | 81.3 | 100 | 38.9 | 41 | 57.7 | 90.9 | 84 | 100 | 40 |
| Buxar | 21.6 | 55.5 | 99.8 | 97.9 | 50 | 46.8 | 30.8 | 55.3 | 100.5 | 92.5 | 50 | 47.1 |
| Rohtas | 28.6 | 72.6 | 103.8 | 95.6 | 62.4 | 78.5 | 40 | 79.6 | 93.1 | 94.9 | 62.3 | 73.2 |
| Kaimur | 24.7 | 66.6 | 92.2 | 100.1 | 91.6 | 121.5 | 48.3 | 71.3 | 95.4 | 96 | 91.6 | 122.1 |
| Gaya | 33.9 | 64.3 | 92.3 | 91.8 | 78.5 | 75.3 | 46.4 | 65.7 | 91.5 | 91.7 | 78.5 | 71.3 |
| Jehanabad | 47.6 | 86.9 | 96.4 | 104.9 | 87.2 | 79.4 | 70.4 | 86.6 | 89.9 | 103.9 | 87.2 | 79.4 |
| Arwal | 36.9 | 45.4 | 106.2 | 59.9 | 99.8 | 97.4 | 45.7 | 43 | 92.8 | 61.1 | 100 | 88.4 |
| Nawada | 47.8 | 82.6 | 98.4 | 94.3 | 72.6 | 54.2 | 70.7 | 85.9 | 97.7 | 93.3 | 113.5 | 57.3 |
| Aurangabad | 32.1 | 89.4 | 96.4 | 90.5 | 99.7 | 273.8 | 79.5 | 89.3 | 95.9 | 88 | 99.6 | 273.4 |
| Saran | 18 | 52.8 | 91.9 | 81.3 | 31.9 | 7.4 | 21.7 | 50.7 | 93.3 | 81 | 33.3 | 7.5 |
| Siwan | 21.6 | 70.3 | 100.9 | 96.8 | 0 | - | 20.8 | 75.4 | 101.2 | 96.8 | 0 | - |
| Gopalganj | 22.7 | 49.5 | 104.3 | 74.2 | 17.5 | 15.1 | 23.2 | 49.7 | 98.4 | 74.9 | 17.5 | 15.1 |
| West Champaran | 26.6 | 59.9 | 105.3 | 64.9 | 77.6 | 0 | 55 | 59 | 101.2 | 64 | 77.3 | 0 |
| East Champaran | 37.4 | 65.1 | 89.1 | 88.6 | 97.6 | 139.6 | 48.2 | 60.2 | 90.2 | 89.8 | 91 | 143.6 |
| Muzaffarpur | 75.7 | 75.1 | 97.4 | 80.1 | 77.1 | 45 | 68.1 | 74.2 | 94.6 | 80 | 77.1 | 44.7 |
| Sitamarhi | 29.7 | 49.8 | 79.4 | 71.6 | 49.5 | 75.7 | 26.5 | 50.6 | 73 | 69.8 | 49.5 | 69.7 |
| Sheohar | 54 | 40.4 | 77.2 | 54.3 | 41.7 | 0.2 | 53.8 | 39.7 | 82.7 | 54.8 | 41.7 | 0.2 |
| Vaishali | 49.8 | 75.7 | 103.4 | 97.2 | 58.3 | 66.6 | 58.4 | 72.8 | 91.6 | 96.2 | 58.2 | 68.1 |
| Darbhanga | 28.5 | 44.6 | 89.9 | 95.4 | 63.9 | 50.7 | 9.6 | 32.1 | 67.1 | 90.4 | 66.7 | 51.2 |
| Madhubani | 16.4 | 21.4 | 77.8 | 52 | 25 | 33.7 | 7.3 | 14 | 40.7 | 50.7 | 25.7 | 31.7 |
| Samastipur | 52.2 | 77.8 | 94.8 | 96.1 | 79.7 | 99.8 | 72.9 | 79.7 | 89.5 | 92.8 | 79.6 | 115.8 |
| Begusarai | 70.7 | 85.1 | 100.7 | 88.7 | 45.8 | 5.2 | 87.1 | 87.3 | 102.9 | 88.3 | 50 | 5.2 |
| Munger | 24.9 | 52.7 | 66.4 | 79.6 | 58.6 | 14 | 33 | 54.3 | 61.7 | 79.1 | 57.3 | 16 |
| Sheikhpura | 24.8 | 53.1 | 62.5 | 92.2 | 75 | 29.3 | 20.8 | 46.3 | 69.5 | 98.5 | 75 | 22.2 |
| Lakhisarai | 22.4 | 55.1 | 49.8 | 72.3 | 73.3 | 22.5 | 29.9 | 57.7 | 60 | 79.5 | 56.6 | 22.5 |
| Jamui | 22.5 | 35.3 | 90 | 82.8 | 74.3 | 88.8 | 16.8 | 32.3 | 82 | 82.3 | 74.3 | 108.5 |
| Khagaria | 53.3 | 89.1 | 123.1 | 95.6 | 109.4 | 21.9 | 76.2 | 89.5 | 118.9 | 96 | 94.3 | 20.6 |
| Bhagalpur | 26 | 29.5 | 75 | 65.6 | 28.1 | 43.7 | 20.8 | 24.9 | 82 | 64 | 25.4 | 43.7 |
| Banka | 25.7 | 43.5 | 80.8 | 61.6 | 64.7 | 106.4 | 17.5 | 41.1 | 72.5 | 58.3 | 43.4 | 109 |
| Saharsa | 58.2 | 68.6 | 104.3 | 86.5 | 66.7 | 73 | 67.1 | 81.6 | 99.3 | 90.6 | 66.7 | 75.6 |
| Supaul | 48.2 | 62 | 92.8 | 86 | 54 | 55.2 | 51.5 | 59.5 | 90.2 | 81 | 54.1 | 56.3 |
| Madhepura | 45.2 | 79 | 89.2 | 89.6 | 0 | 43 | 51.7 | 77.8 | 89.2 | 89.2 | 0 | 44 |
| Purnea | 30.2 | 60.6 | 78.9 | 91.5 | 102.2 | 101.5 | 28 | 59.9 | 85.2 | 84.2 | 97.5 | 101.3 |
| Kishanganj | 46.5 | 42.2 | 75 | 52.8 | 50 | 13.4 | 41.2 | 43.3 | 74.7 | 52.3 | 50 | 13.6 |
| Araria | 26 | 44.5 | 80.8 | 72.7 | 100 | 57.2 | 30 | 43.8 | 73.9 | 72.9 | 91.7 | 59 |
| Katihar | 56.2 | 68.8 | 92.2 | 74.2 | 53.4 | 43.2 | 72.8 | 68.6 | 91.2 | 73.9 | 53.4 | 44 |
| Bihaar | 37 | 61 | 92.4 | 82.1 | 67.2 | 61.3 | 44.6 | 60.5 | 86.8 | 82.8 | 66.7 | 62.4 |

Source :Department of Food and Consumer Protection, GOB.

Evaluation of Targeted Public Distributions System (TPDS) By Planning Commission

- ♦ 58 per cent of subsidized food grains does not reach the BPL families, 22% reaches APL and 36% sold in black
- ♦ High cost of handling, for one rupee transfer to the poor, the Govt spends Rs.3.65
- ♦ Targeting errors, ghost cards and non-BPL households
- ♦ Only 57% of the poor households have ration cards
- ♦ FPSs are not viable, they remain in business through leakages
- ♦ Homeless often do not have ration cards

Problems of Targeted Public Distributions System (TPDS) in India

- ♦ Inadequate storage capacity with FCI
- ♦ Poor condition of the State Food Corporations
- ♦ States have not invested in food infrastructure
- ♦ G01 quota lapses after 1 month
- ♦ Politics in the allotment of APL quota
- ♦ Shopkeepers lease out their shops to contractors
- ♦ The shop does not open for more than 2-3 days in a month
- ♦ Ration cards being mortgaged to ration shop owners
- ♦ Too many intermediaries between the shopkeeper and the FCI Average lifting from PDS per person in Kerala was 4.58 kg per month, it was only 0.15 kg in Bihar and 0.29 kg in UP.

Problems of Public Distribution System (PDS) in Bihar

- ♦ People got food grains only for 2 - 3 months in a year
- ♦ They get 25 kg of food grain instead of 35 kg
- ♦ Most of the shops remained closed
- ♦ Coupons are often distributed incorrectly, that is, to wrong persons
- ♦ Dealers charge higher rates than the actual price
- ♦ Poor delivery capacity of Bihar Food Corporation
- ♦ FCI godown capacity is limited

Conclusion and Suggestions

In the present environment, food security system is one of the most significant human development aspects. There is a close linkage existing between food security and socio economic development, rural health and public distribution system (PDS), for improving human development indicators in the developing countries. We should try to understand and find out the optimal solution of mitigating the problems of poverty, hunger, diseases, and malnutrition.

Professor Amartya Sen, a strong admirer and critic of India, has been urging India to accord high priority to elimination of latent hunger, under nourishment and malnutrition. He has a theory that democracies take quick notice of famines but not of the invisible famines which affect many more millions than famines. It is not easy to prove him wrong but India has certainly a good chance to do that if only it tries with earnestness and determination.

There are close linkages existing between food security and socio-economic development, human rights, rural health, public Distribution system (PDS), and improving human development indicators in the developing countries. It is well documented that most poor

families in the world spend nearly 80 percent of their total income on food grains. Prof. Amartya Sen states that the causes of hunger in India currently are the wide prevalence of poverty and the inability of a large section of the population to buy food or to establish entitlement over an adequate amount of food. Here it is imperative to give priority to food security problem and challenges in the present environment.

A few suggestions for Targeted Public Distributions System (TPDS)

- ♦ Universal entitlement to all PTGs and homeless
- ♦ Involve women's SHGs, cooperatives, and panchayats
- ♦ Give shops to those who already have shops
- ♦ Simplify procedure
- ♦ Try cash subsidy on a pilot basis in urban areas
- ♦ Door-step delivery of PDS commodities to shops
- ♦ Replace ration cards by portable laminated cards
- ♦ Develop computerized grievance redressal system through a toll-free number
- ♦ Stakeholder involvement, frequent open door meetings with consumers Ban exports, import more Supply to 70% people with BPL/AAY prices.

Suggested Action for Bihar Improve investment in Bihar

- ♦ FCI should buy paddy from farmers
- ♦ Food Ministry transport and storage of foodgrains Donors to step up aid to Bihar
- ♦ Bihar Government should set up an Impact and Evaluation Agency
- ♦ Identifying cross sectoral and procedural bottlenecks so that absorption of central funds improves
- ♦ Improve recruitment and procurement
- ♦ Learn from best practices from other states Improve targeting efficiency

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