



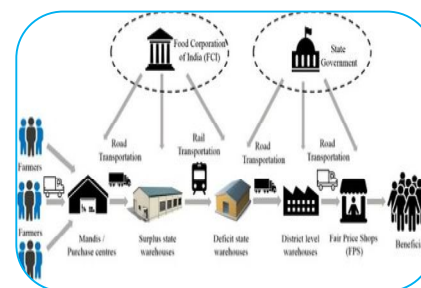
PROBLEMS AND PROBABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IN INDIA (A Case of Surguja and Jashpur Districts in Chhattisgarh)

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ABSTRACT:

India is predominantly an agricultural country and major portion of the population depends upon agriculture for their livelihoods. The economic conditions of India before independence were completely different as compared to the present economic conditions. The problem of poverty is a curse to mankind and has ruined lives of poor for years. Since the 1950s the Indian Government has initiated many programmes for the reduction of poverty- Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Rural Landless and Employment Generation Programmes (RLEGP), Training Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) etc. Amongst the various poverty alleviation programmes Public Distribution System is one of them. Public Distribution System plays vital role in our country and throughout the world. The Government of India has launched a scheme of PDS. The basic objective of the PDS in India is to provide cheap and subsidised food to the poor and thereby to protect consumers from the impact of rising of food products.



KEYWORDS : Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY).

INTRODUCTION:

The Public Distribution System (PDS) evolved as a system of management of scarcity and for distribution of food grains at affordable prices. Over the years, PDS has turned into a significant piece of Government's strategy for the executives of food economy in the country. PDS is supplement in nature and isn't planned to make accessible the whole necessity of any of the products disseminated under it to a family or a part of the general public. PDS is worked under the obligation of the Focal and the State Legislatures working closely together. The focal government assumes a sense of ownership with obtainment, capacity, transportation and mass portion of food grains at sponsored costs. For this reason, in 1965 Food Company of India was set up. The essential capability of FCI is to attempt the buy, stockpiling, transportation, circulation and offer of food grains and different staples. The functional obligation including assignment inside State, ID of qualified families, issue of apportion cards and management of the working of the Fair Value Shops (FPSs) rests with the State Legislatures. Under the PDS, by and by products, in particular wheat, rice and coarse grains are being allotted to the States/UTs for circulation. States/UTs likewise appropriate extra things of mass utilization through the PDS outlets

like sugar, beats, eatable oil, iodized salt, flavors, and etc.as per their necessity. There is at present a network of about 4.61 lakh PDS retail outlets in the country.

Various schemes have been introduced under PDS by Government of India, to ensure food security for all and make a hunger free India.

OBJECTIVES OF PDS:

The main objectives of PDS in India was –

- Maintaining price stability
- Raising welfare of the poor (by providing access to basic foods at reasonable prices to the vulnerable people).
- Rationing during the situation of scarcity
- Keeping a check on private trade

Chhattisgarh state is the first state to have its own food security act. Chhattisgarh is a state which is also known as the rice bowl of the country because of its strong presence in agricultural production and is mostly tribal dominated state. Nearly half of the Chhattisgarh's population has been estimated to be below poverty line. According to the report of the panel headed by former PMEAC chairman C.Ranagarajan 47.9 per cent people are poor in the Chhattisgarh state and are one of the most backward states in the country.

METHODOLOGY AND PROBLEMS:

Current study, conducted by the Researcher, has been undertaken to answer the questions regarding number of issues which have been arising at present scenario related to PDS and food insecurity in some pockets of Surguja and Jashpur districts. The Problems and issues are as under:

- Failure to serve the BPL population
- Lack of transparency and accountability
- Diversion / leakages of food grains to the open market
- Maoist menace in supply of food grains
- Poor quality of food grains supplied
- Delay in allocation and transportation of food grains
- Limited reach of food grains and often FPSs remains closed.
- Issues of improper identification of beneficiaries

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

To find a solution to the above problems of PDS, the researcher has undertaken the present study asking as to how can it be made more efficient and effective?

In the context of food security and poverty alleviation it is essential to look at the efficiency of the Public Distribution System which has been operating for decades. Through Public Distribution System, consumers are provided essential commodities like food grains, sugar, kerosene etc., at subsidized rate through fair price shops by the Department of Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection. PDS is implemented by the Department. The Department procures paddy at declared price for providing the farmers fair price of their produce. Besides this, the Department protects and promotes the interests of consumers.

Entitlements:

Category	Entitlements	Identification Criteria
Excluded Households	None.	Income tax payers; households in non-scheduled areas who own more than 4 hectares of irrigated land or 8 hectares of non-irrigated land; households in urban areas that own a pucca house with carpet area more than 1,000 sq. ft. and are Liable to pay property tax.
General Households	15 kg food grain at Rs 9.50/kg for rice and Rs 7.50/kg for wheat.	Not specified in the act (this is a “default” category).
Priority Households	35 kg food grain at Rs. 2/kg; 2 kg pulses at Rs. 10/Kg (in non-scheduled areas); 2 kg chana at Rs. 5/kg (in scheduled areas); 2 kg iodized salt (free).	Not specified in the Act, but the following categories are to be included: landless labourers, small and marginal farmers (with land up to two hectare)s, workers in urban informal sector and Households of construction workers.
Antyodaya Households	35 kg foodgrain at Rs. 1 per kg; 2 kg pulses at Rs. 10/kg (in non-scheduled areas); 2 kg chana at Rs. 5/kg (in Scheduled areas); 2 kg iodised salt (free).	Not specified in the Act, but the following categories are to be included: Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups; households headed by terminally ill persons, widows or single women, physically challenged persons; households headed by a person of age sixty years or more with no means of subsistence; persons freed from bonded labour; and those who are currently entitled to the MukhyamantriKhadyannaSahayata Yojana.

As regards the problems in the PDS the following points came up:

- Delay in monthly allocation of the ration-items, followed by the diversion or leakages problems,
- Lack of accountability at all levels,
- Unviable to run Fair Price Shops (FPS) honestly, in the implementation level.
- Absence of transparency in the whole process
- Lack of community participation.

Thus a multiple of problems do render the constraints in smooth running of the Public Distribution system (PDS).

Public Distribution System is an essential instrument to provide food grains to the poor people. It is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and State Government. In the study it was found that majority of the people preferred rice compared to other commodities and respondents were

satisfied with the functioning of the ration shops. The satisfaction level of the commodities differs in the rural areas. Apart from the gram panchayats, involvement of the women SHGs in the distribution of food grains brings transparency. Responses of the respondent samples shows that is problem of leakages, delay in monthly allocation of commodities, lack of transparency and accountability, storage facilities in the PDS of the sampling areas.

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

FINDINGS

1. Most of the FPSs are run by the Gram Panchayats in both the blocks of Jashpur district while in Surguja it is run by the Gram Panchayat as well as women SHGs.
2. Distribution pattern of PDS shows that the commodities including rice and kerosene were high in all the 4 blocks.
3. Female respondents were highest in all the sampling areas.
4. Majority of the ration cards were in the name of females.
5. Difference was found between the commodities allotted and distributed, particularly rice.
6. Compared to other ration card holders families with blue colour ration cards were the highest.
7. In all the categories, majority of the families having ration cards for more than 4 years and above.
8. Lack of information on the availability of commodities was also found in the study area.
9. Information related to the quantity and price of the commodities were displayed on the notice board in the gram panchayats of the sampling area.
10. It is also found in the study that 10-12 families having ration cards are not getting ration for more than one and half years.
11. Lack of accountability and transparency was also found in most of the sampling areas.
12. Lack of participation was found among the sample respondents.
13. Inadequate place to store ration commodities and lack of transportation facilities.

SUGGESTION

1. Women SHGs must be made to run the FPSs. Her contribution will make PDS ration shop more effective. For this they must be given proper training programmes to run PDS shops from time to time.
2. All FPSs need to be computerized and must be linked to Aadhar
3. Strong administrative bodies must be set up at the block level as well as at the gram panchayat level to keep on check about the proper functioning of the ration shop.
4. Electronic weighing machines must be made available to all the ration shops for proper distribution of commodities.
5. Vigilance Committees being set up at the district level must keep on checking ration shops from time to time.
6. Fingerprint biometric devices should be made available to all the ration shops.
7. Must be provided godowns for storing PDS foodgrains.

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