

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF UTTARAKHAND

Nidhi Arora¹, P.D.Singh², Prof. V.A.Bourai³

^{1&3}Department of Economics, SGRR PG College, Dehradun

²Department of Economics, H.N.B. Garhwal University, Srinagar Garhwal

ABSTRACT

Food security is a major concern in many parts of India as hunger and malnutrition still persist. As one of the criteria for Human Development, Food security is considered a basic necessity in many parts of India. Public Distribution System is the most important medium of government through which food security is ensured at micro level. Although it is very important medium but in India along with other government policies its working has not been successful to achieve the desired level of food security. There is plenty of literature on food security and public distribution system, findings of past studies found that in various parts of India hunger and malnutrition still persists in spite of huge stocks of food grains. Present study tries to find the role of Public Distribution System (PDS) in achieving food security its effectiveness and Impact of PDS on achieving the food security of households.

Keywords: Food security, Micro level public distribution system, government policies, discrepancies in distribution.

INTRODUCTION

For the one billion people living in poverty around the world, securing life's basic necessities for themselves or their families is a daily challenge. Solving this seemingly intractable problem is development's main goal, and identifying research-based policy solutions to poverty is central to this mission. Many researchers have explored the linkages among poverty, livelihoods, food security, and nutrition and evaluate the programs and policies that can best help families rise out of poverty. This addresses policies to promote rural income growth and development through agricultural technology adoption and linking smallholders to markets. By emphasizing the important role of gender in intra household decision making, and using behavioral experiments to understand the effect of risk and stress on the poor, our research identifies more effective and sustainable poverty alleviation strategies. The process would also evaluate social protection

programs and other interventions that increase investment in human capital and improve coping strategies for the poor. PDS is a mechanism through which government is trying to meet the needs related to food security. Present study tries to analyse the status of food security and suggestions to improve the mechanism in the study area.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Estimates of poverty in India are typically based on normative minimum calorie intake. The calorie norms were fixed at 2400 calorie per person per day for rural areas and 2100 per person per day for urban areas by the Task Force constituted by the planning commission in 1979. Poverty line are calculated using the income method and involve the calculation of the minimum income at which the specified minimum nutritional needs are satisfied, given the consumption pattern of the population.

Anjana Thampi, (2017) in her research work on title “The Impact of the Public Distribution System in India assessed the impact of PDS on the nutritional indicators of children aged 7–19 between 2004–2005 and 2011–2012, the findings indicates that PDS has a significant impact on the longer-term nutritional indicator and people has shown high dependence on PDS for sufficient intake of calories. **Raghav Puri (2012)** analysed the Reforms to the public distribution system in Chhattisgarh and suggested that extending coverage, improving delivery and increasing transparency are some of the important measure of revival that will bring greater satisfaction among beneficiaries. According to the study conducted by **Sivakkolundu and Loganathan (2013)**, about six crores families the nation is benefited by the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). Further **Amutha and Rathi (2017)** analysed the Role and Effectiveness of Public Distribution System in India. The study concluded that globally there is enough food for all but unequal distribution and access to foods is the main e main problem for food insecurity. Author suggests that technological upgradation, policy reform, digitalization and application Banking and Information technologies will help a lot in bringing food security to all.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

PDS was considered a great success in securing food security during 1987 drought. Several studies have been taken up to evaluate the Public Distribution System and know its contribution. Present study focuses to find the impact of PDS on achieving food security and poverty alleviation in the hilly region state of Uttarakhand. The following are the specific Objectives:

1. To study the PDS and food security in the study area.
2. To study the effectiveness of PDS by assessing the shortcomings of the PDS in the study area.

The methodology consisted of collecting available information through a structured Questionnaire and information through Government data sources. Primary data is collected using convenient sampling to find the required results. The data so collected has been arranged and tabulated to facilitate further analysis to arrive at conclusions. Some of the appropriate statistical methods like Mean and Standard Deviation are used with the help of SPSS and MS Excel to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) has brought many changes in the functional autonomy of public distribution system and helped all the 36 States & UTs, benefiting 80.72 Crore persons in the country by providing them access to highly subsidized foodgrains at Rs.1/2/3 per kg. for coarse grains/wheat/rice respectively. Central government has granted Rs.2959.22 Crore central assistance to state government to meet the expenditure incurred on intra-State movement of food grains and fair price shop dealers' margins. Such an arrangement has been made for the first time under NFSA to ensure greater food security. Digitalization in the accounting system and linking of aadhar has helped a lot in preventing leakage. As a result a total of 2.75 Crore ration cards have been deleted/cancelled by State/UT Governments during the years 2013 to 2017 (up to November 2017). Based on this the Government has been able to achieve an estimated 'Rightful Targeting of Food Subsidies' of about Rs. 17,500 Crore per annum. Government is putting continuous effort to bring the transparency in the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). According to government sources, the Department is implementing scheme on End-to-end Computerization of TPDS Operations at a total cost of 884 Crore on cost-sharing basis with the States/UTs. The Scheme provides for digitization of ration cards & beneficiary records, computerization of supply chain management, setting up of transparency portals and grievance redressal mechanisms. In the past few years department of food and civil supply has initiated many efforts in bringing change in procuring, developing warehousing, transportation and accounting system to render better services to poor and provide better food security to its entire citizen.

Land holding and Poverty level

An attempt is made to study the pattern of holding of different type of ration cards among respondents having different land holding pattern. The overall distribution of ration cards among different land holding group is almost evenly distributed according to their population. It is observed that majority of the PDS facility holder are marginal farmer as 61.5% respondents indicated that they are having land up to 3 Hectare only. Majority of them are having semi pucca and kuchha houses having 2-3 rooms for their family.

Table 1: Cross tabulation of Land Holding and Type of Ration Card

| | | Type of Ration Card | | | | Total |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----|----------|------------|-------|
| | | APL | BPL | Antyoday | Annapoorna | |
| Land Holding | Up to 1 Hectare | 7 | 47 | 4 | 3 | 61 |
| | 2-3 Hectare | 28 | 26 | 4 | 6 | 64 |
| | 3-5 hectare | 21 | 28 | 4 | 3 | 56 |
| | More than 5 hectare | 12 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 22 |
| Total | | 68 | 108 | 15 | 12 | 203 |

(Source: Compiled by researcher through primary data)

The proportion of different type of ration cards among card holders revealed that BPL card are meant for poor family having less land. It is 47 BPL card owner belong to the group having less than 1 hectare land. Whereas Antyoday and Anna poorna card distribution are almost similar across different land holding respondents. APL card are issued to majority of respondents having more land and other livelihood. The pattern is found to be in line with the belief that SC, ST and OBC's constitute major chunk of poor population. The distribution of all type of cards among social classes is evenly distributed to large extent irrespective of area of residence. In Uttarakhand, food purchasing power and agricultural productivity determines the food security of communities. Due to adverse geographic condition, agricultural productivity of the state is poor resulting in large food deficits and leading to a considerable proportion of the adult male population migrating from the region in search of employment and livelihoods and majority of family depends upon Public Distribution System (PDS) for assuring their food security.

Nature of Employment of the respondents

Nature of employment primarily decides the food security. With this an attempt was directed to explore the nature of employment of the card holder's population in the region.

Table 2: Nature of employment

| | | Frequency | Percentage | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--|-----------|------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | own agricultural and livestock activity | 25 | 12.3 | 12.3 | 12.3 |
| | Casual worker in form activities | 11 | 5.4 | 5.4 | 17.7 |
| | Casual worker in non form activities | 12 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 23.6 |
| | Permanent job in industry | 19 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 33.0 |
| | Government job | 88 | 43.3 | 43.3 | 76.4 |
| | Seasonal jobs in industry and other services | 48 | 23.6 | 23.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 203 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

(Source: Compiled by researcher through primary data)

It is seen that 43.3% respondents are having government job. 23.6% respondents are working with Seasonal jobs in industry and other services. 12.3% respondents are engaged with own agricultural and livestock activity. 5.4% respondents are engaged as Casual worker in form activities, 5.9% respondents are engaged with Casual worker in non form activities and 9.4% respondents are engaged with Permanent job in industry. This signifies that even agricultural productivity is less but remittance from the family members to their dependence family assures their food security to a great extent.

Government of India in association with state government has initiated implementation of Central schemes for the poor people's welfare without discrimination. Government encourage the state government to give suggestion on outcome-based allocations and expenditure correction, while calling for a widespread debate and consultations on simultaneous progress of all deprived section of society. With this into consideration, an attempt was made to explore whether they availed any scheme like Prime minister's Awas yojan/ Indira Awas Yojana from the central/ state assistance. It is observed that more than half of the respondents 61.6% has availed the schemes. 5.4% indicated that they have partially availed the scheme. On the other hand 33% respondents indicated that they have not availed any such scheme.

Irregularities in Public Distribution System

An attempt was made to know the Irregularities in the supply of ration through PDS system. Multiple response received through respondents indicated that majority of them indicated that Irregular supply and Insufficient quantity are the main irregularity in the PDS operators. Bad

quality and dishonesty in measurement are the other important irregularities expressed by the respondents in the issuance of ration from PDS fair price shops.

Table 3: Irregularities in the supply of ration through PDS system

| | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|------------------|
| | N | Percent | |
| Insufficient quantity | 98 | 23.3% | 51.3% |
| Bad Quality | 76 | 18.1% | 39.8% |
| Dishonesty in measurement | 77 | 18.3% | 40.3% |
| Irregular supply | 141 | 33.5% | 73.8% |
| Others | 29 | 6.9% | 15.2% |
| Total | 421 | 100.0% | 220.4% |

(Source: Compiled by researcher through primary data)

Fair price shops and PDS have been the breeding ground for corruption right from its inception. Reason collected from the respondents about not getting full quota of grain from PDS may be many. Corruption remained the central issue in the Public distribution system as a result leakage remained high. However intervention by central as well as state government has brought many improvements in the system. During the survey the data was collected through questionnaire from the respondents and feedback were taken from card holders to strengthen PDS and improve food security.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis covers the dimension of transformation that PDS is able to bring change like income gains, poverty reduction and nutritional enhancements etc. that is gauged through a mix of traditional as well as recent advances in methodology. Another valid deficiency was its marginal impact, as far as income transfer to poor households is concerned. If we care about true food security, an efficient and effective mechanism to reach food to all people at all times at affordable prices is an essential prerequisite. This is also crucial to alleviate poverty. Digitalization of all transactions and records seems to be a welcome move by the Government and this should be implemented in full. Study analysed data on the basis of economic status where maximum respondents were from BPL and it was found that there are certain irregularities in the fulfilment of the food security in the study area.

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