

Public Distribution System - An Important Component for the Poor and Backward Classes to Have Access to Food

Dr. Sumanta Bhattacharya¹, Dr. Heera Lal², Bhavneet Kaur Sachdev³

¹Research Scholar at MAKAUT, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

²IAS, Additional Mission Director at National Health Mission, Uttar Pradesh, India

³Political Science Hons, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

ABSTRACT

Food security is emerging as a global threat, effecting every continent and part of the world, with India having a humongous population, with huge amount of food being wasted or getting rotten due to lack of cold storage infrastructure, Public Distribution system is the only hope for the people to receive a minimal food on a daily basis. PDS provides food grain at a minimum cost to the people every month especially the poor people, people living below poverty line, tribes and other vulnerable sector of the society. Since 1960 it has been serving the people. During the COVID -19 pandemic the PDS was used as a platform to reach out to people and provide them food grains, in fact free food grains was available and the people who didn't had a ration card, to option for a e-coupon from the websites along with that lakhs of new ration card was formed. The Public Distribution system however have certain issues attach with it, the problem of fake ration card, lack of transparency which has resulted in the stolen of food grains from the ration shop and taken to the open market, moreover the PDS doesn't provide protein and nutrition foods which the body requires the most like Millets and pulses which needs to be added and women should be educated on nutrition literacy for focus more on the nutrition based crop along with other farmers.

KEYWORDS: Food security, PSD, COVID-19, ration card, e-coupons, food grains, cold storage infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

India has been facing the issue of food crisis ever since its India and Burma partition, where India rich rice cultivation land was given to Burma. During Bengal Famine in 1943, 2 to 3 million people die due to hunger, disease, malnutrition, malaria and displacement of the population. India has experienced 12 famine during the British ruler, there begins the start of food security issues. Even after the British left the problem continued. Green Revolution, Yellow revolution and White revolution happened to improve the food security and also to provide employment to the farmers. The green revolution focus was on wheat and rice, Today India produces wheat and rice in ample amount and these crops require a lot of water. There has been advancement in the Horticulture industry in India. India after Brazil produces maximum amount of fruits in the world and

vegetables also after China. The way the horticulture Industry is adding new horizon to the economy, we expect our import rate to reduce and provide a lot of vitamins and nutrients to the body. However the big problem of our food system is that half of the fruits and vegetables get rotten due to lack of cold storage in the country like 60 %, if that would have been provided to the people, then India's food security and nutrition problem can come to an end. India has developed modern agriculture techniques, has adopted smart agriculture use of space technology, still the food security remains a big problem today. Every one out of fifth Child is dying because of malnutrition and undernourishment, Pregnant lady are unaware of the main nutrition and vitamins require for the body, which also results in the poor growth and development of the child, People of younger ages

How to cite this paper: Dr. Sumanta Bhattacharya | Dr. Heera Lal | Bhavneet Kaur Sachdev "Public Distribution System - An Important Component for the Poor and Backward Classes to Have Access to Food" Published in International

Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-5 | Issue-6, October 2021, pp.594-598, www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd46465.pdf



URL:

Copyright © 2021 by author (s) and International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development Journal. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



have started to have diseases and other health care problems because of the wrong food habits. Indian food habits have also contributed to the food security. Lack of nutrient literacy among the rural India and farmers, crops which are accepted and eaten by all are only growth, crop with high demand. Earlier India used to produce millets, but as the demand reduced, the farmer minimized the production of crops. However millet are rich source of nutrition and protein. In order to cut on the food security issue and the cost of the raw material were too high. Even during the British rule excess production of indigo on lands unsuitable, India cultivation land has been destroyed. It was British who then started the ration system in 1960s the Public Distribution system which has continued till today, in the Public Distribution system you get food grain at a minimum price, it provided to them who has a ration card. Today it provides food grains to 160 million people both rural and urban areas.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of this exploration, I have used a amalgamation of two of the archetypical social sciences research tools application –as they are authentic and brilliant method to assemble statistics from multiple appellants in a methodical and convenient way. Questions were asked to the common youth, public policy Analyst, urban people, farmers, rural women, survey, interviews –consisting of several interrogations which were dispersed among representative of each contender group.

Objective of the Research Paper

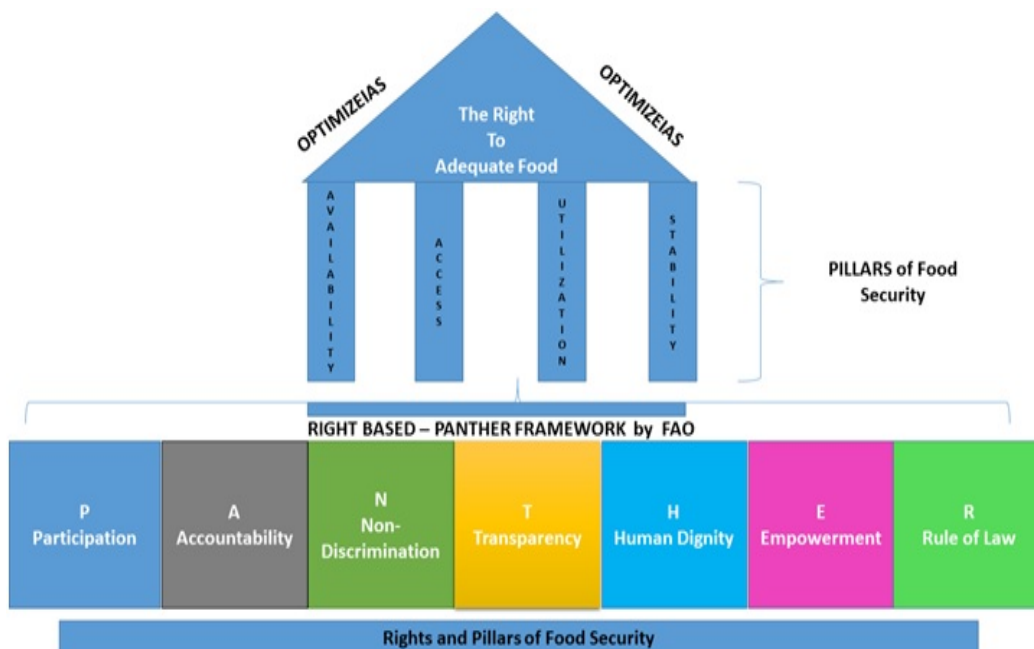
The main areas of exploration in this paper incorporates

1. A study on Public Distribution System in India.
2. How PDS have worked during COVID-19 and provide food security to its people.
3. What are the challenges of PDS and how can we overcome it.

Literature Review

The National Nutrition Policy was adopted in 1993 which aim to remove the problem of malnutrition and achieve an ideal level of nutrition for all. The policy tries to balance between the short and long term measures. Short term will include direct nutrition interventions and long term would include structural changes for improving health and nutrition status in

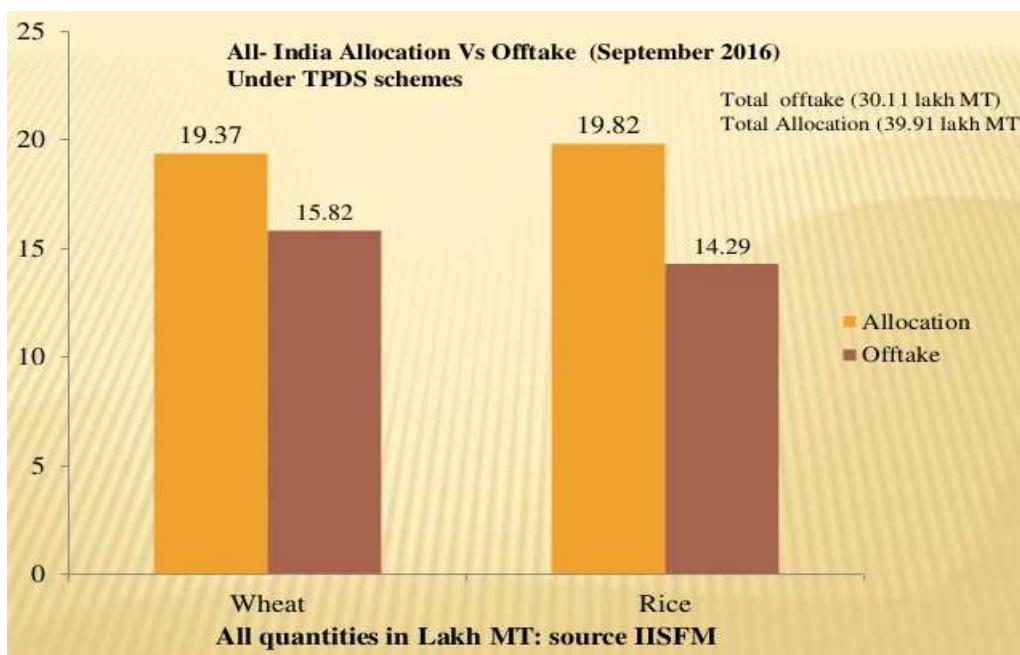
the society. The Direct short term intervention includes: Universalization of ICDS, Nutrition education of mother, reach out to the adolescent girls, Fortification of food, Spread information about low cost nutritious food, control and alleviation of micronutrients malnutrition, coverage pregnant women. Long term Interventions include: Ameliorate dietary pattern, improving the purchase, ensuring household food security, educating people on literacy, Basic nutrition and Health education, refine the status of women, land reform, strengthening the Public allocation Structure in India. Public Distribution System (PDS) aims to ensure availability of essential goods like wheat, rice and oils to consumers at a low price in shops. There are supplied before the market rate. It has a grid of more than 28462,000 fair equitable outlets which have been distributing items of 300 million worth to 160 million people. The PDS plays a very important tool in providing food grains at an affordable price, it is funded by both the union and state executive with the aim to become self-sufficient. It is a tool to refine the food security in India. However it has been failed in the recent year to serve the people living below poverty line. It is more focused in the urban sector. The main motive behind the PDS was to support price programme for consumers in the 1960s, with only 4 items which would include rice, wheat, sugar, edible oil and kerosene to be sold at subsidised prices. In many cases the rich and the middle class people have been benefitted from this scheme much more than the poor people. It is expensive and largely untargeted problem as the poor can't take the maximum benefit out of it, the farmers and the villages don't have access to the PDS, and are dying due to starvation and malnutrition. Out of 67% who are to be covered under this scheme, 108 million people are excluded. Specially during the lockdown we have noticed that 500 million people don't have a ration card, the government have issued lakh of ration card in 2020 and 2021 and double the amount of food grains to maintain food security. PDS has played a significant role in the drought region over the years in providing food grains to the vulnerable population, to the tribal, the government allocated food grains based on the poverty rate to the states. Today PDS has reached to almost all states and the cost varies depending on the status of people.



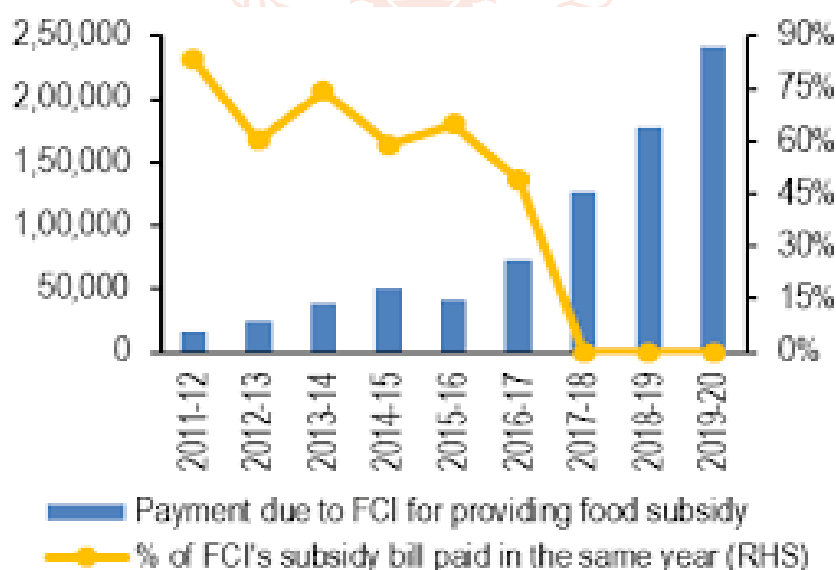
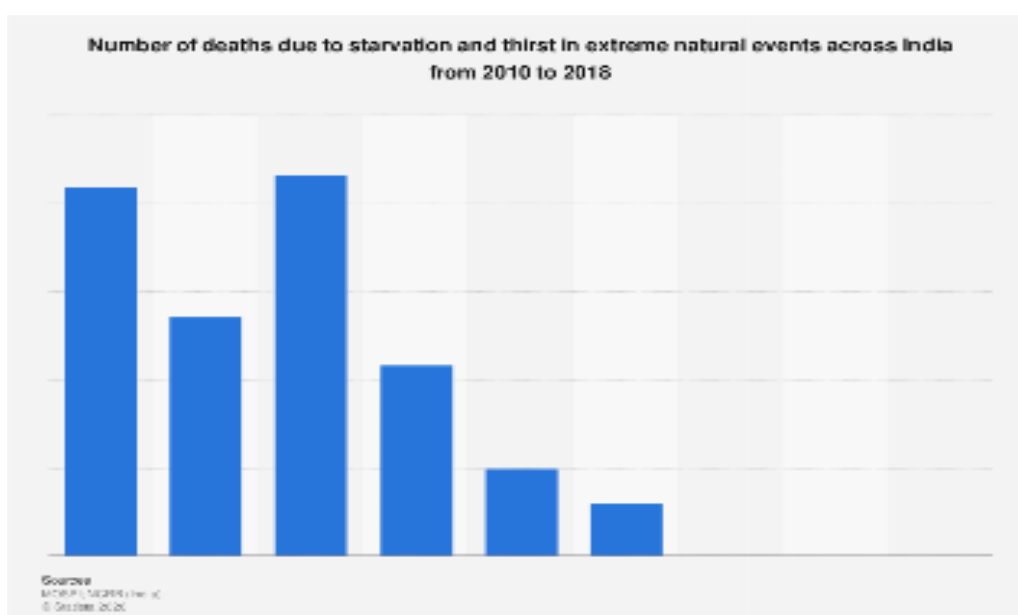
Findings

Targeted Public Distribution System was formed in 1997 especially for the families below poverty line, and food grains were available at a lower cost for their families compared to those above poverty line. under the 1992 Revamped Public Distribution System to reach out to isolated, hilly, reasons of the country to serve the under privileged. It is divided into three categories the BPL, API and AAY (Antyodaua Anna Yojana) for destitute to reduce starvation for the poorest people. It is functions with collaborate responsibility of both Centre and state administration. The Centre administration through food and organization of India have taken by the leadership of storage, acquirement communication, and distribution of food Kernel to the state government. The issue of ration cards, managing Fair Price Shops, identification of the category of families is the work of the state government. The common items include sugar, wheat, rice and oil while some states in particular season distribute iodized, salt, pulses and Millets. In Karnataka, Millets is distributed in the PSD. PSD establishment can be traced back to the world war II as a war tie apportion before the 1960.

In 2013, under the National Food safety Act, the act largely depends on Targeted Public distribution system for food to be reach out to every section of the society and right to food is a human right. The central government buys food raw materials from farmers at MSP and then distribute at a cost to all the states, and it is the work of the state to make the food grain reach to every go down of the ration shop where you get food at the lowest price. It has helped to ensure food and nutritional safety of the country and in balancing food cost and making ti accessible to the poor people at a reasonable cost also to maintain the cushion commodities of food grains in cold storage so that flow is on throughout the year.



During this COVID 19 period Public Distribution system is a hope to reach out to people, many states are providing free grains to people, those people who don't have a ration card can apply for a e-coupon. Moreover the government has doubled the amount for PDS and will be available free for cost for months till situation doesn't get better. There were around 500 million people you didn't have access to ration cards. Under the Aatmanirbhar scheme the government stated to provide free food grains to 2.7 crore people to bridge the gap, and the food grain will not require a ration card, the target was set to 8 crore at the early stage, Even today most of the vulnerable section of the society don't have a ration card. Delhi launched new 71 lakh ration card and in 2020,60 lakh e-coupons were launched, the government through the tools of PSD has been trying to bring positive changes and balance food security. India is being a victim of food crisis today, the food waste is much more compared to any other country. The food wasted in India can serve the huge vulnerable section of the society and lack of cold storages have resulted in 60 % of the food turning rotten especially fruits and vegetables. This has resulted in lack of nutrition scarcity in the nation. Every individual can purchase 5 kg of food grain per month, where the cost is 2 rupees for 1 kg wheat, 3 rupees for 1 kg rice. Many people in India die due to hunger, 7000 people die due to malnutrition on a daily basis and more than 25 Lakh people die due to starvation annually in India. In India during the pandemic more people have died because of starvation in particular in the rural area due to shortage or no food available and in many places PDS couldn't because of corona cases.



The leakage of food grains and Black marketing is a very big problems which resulted in shortage of food grains and this food grains during transportation is taken to the open market instead of ration shops, we also have many fake ration cards and absences of transparency in the system, with only rice and wheat available this is not enough to provide acute nutrition to the body, there are no vegetables, pulses or millets available in these Public Allocation Structure.

Way Forward

Public allocation structure can support to eliminate the problem of food security to a great extent. We need to build 7 to 8 cold storage on highways of every state and city. The production must be as per the requirements, we should educate the farmers on the important crops which provide maximum nutrition to the body and can be sold at a minimum price, which can also help to end the problem of malnutrition, CCTV camera must be installed in all ration shops in order to maintain transparency and make sure that food grain are not shown from the shops. The government should be accountable to the state as well as to the citizens on everything related to Public Distribution System. Food coupons and e-coupons should be made available with proper registration on the website of every coupon holder or ration card holder so that no fake ration cards can exist. More pulses and millets should be added to the list apart from wheat and rice. The food grains should reach out to all corner and isolated region of the society, the tribal, rural people, vulnerable sector should have access it shouldn't be biased to any particular region. A new policy should be formed for Public Distribution system and a new national nutrition policy which will provide long term benefit.

Conclusion

The Public Distribution system has been a very old mode of providing food to the vulnerable and isolated sector of the society. It is available both to the urban and rural people. PDS over the years have balanced the food grains distribution system. The Central and State government have collaborated and brought any

changes in the PDS during this COVID 19 pandemic the government has provided free food grains to the people using the platform of Public distribution system and established lakhs of ration cards and e-coupon for its citizens to reduce the gap between the urban and rural food supply and make India self-sufficient. Aatminarbhar Bharat. The way food crisis issue is rising in India, the government must introduce new policies, food policies and agriculture policies for making food secured and reduce the death rate.

Reference

- [1] Mahima Ghabru, Ganga Devi, Nilam Rathod, 2017, January, Public Distribution system in India: key issues and Challenges. Research Gate
- [2] Neetu Abey George and Fiona H. McKay, The Public Distribution system and food security in India, MDPI, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.
- [3] PIB, Delhi, Distribution of Food grains During COVID-19 Crisis, 2020, September, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- [4] Pallabi Pathak, Tapan Gope, Nadine Bader, Effect of COVID-19 on public distribution system in India, Volume 7 No 3, IJCMPPH.
- [5] Sudhashu Pandey, 2020, December, How India got PDS Delivery right during the Pandemic. Financial express