

Steps Towards Achieving Right to Food in India- An Analysis on Government Initiative

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ABSTRACT

Food is the basic human necessity and without adequate food people cannot lead a healthy life. The international organizations have already recognized right food as human right. The Sustainable Development Goal of 2030 adopted by the United Nations vowed to make the world free of hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. India being the signatory of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and member of the United Nations has obligations to eradicate hunger, poverty, malnutrition to ensure human rights of every citizen. Besides Constitutional provisions, the government of India has taken legal measures to ensure right to food and food security of the people in India. The National Food Security Act of 2013 is the most vital instrument for such purpose. There are plethora of schemes and policies adopted by the government starting from independence of the country till day. The 2023 Report of Global Hunger Index placed India in 111th position where 125 countries of the world were in the list. Though government of India termed it as erroneous, still there requires study on implementation of food policy in India. Therefore it becomes very pertinent to study the strategy and measures adopted by the government to ensure right to food and eradicate hunger. In this paper the steps taken by the government of India including state of Assam and the national strategy for implementation of right to food has been analyzed. Also has focused on international support to achieve right to food for everyone.

Keywords: Right to Food, Hunger, Legal Measures, Implementation, International Support.

INTRODUCTION

“Food is the moral right of all who are born into this world.” [Norman Borlaug](#)¹

All human beings born in this world have a right to have food as it is the basic necessity. To live with dignity as a human everyone requires healthy, nutritious and safe food. The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations has vowed to make world free from hunger by 2030. Besides these Goals and Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) there are many other documents at international level which talks about nutrition and freedom from hunger and starvation. The problem of human hunger and starvation can be solved with proper attention and legal measures by the government.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Being the member of the United Nations and state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and signatory of the Sustainable Development Goal, 2030 India have obligations to eradicate hunger, poverty, and malnutrition to ensure human rights of every citizen. Indian Constitution under Article 253 empowers the parliament to enact laws to fulfill international commitment.² Therefore, the government of India has come under obligation to shield poor and needy from hunger especially the vulnerable one and to guarantee everyone food. Right to food includes among all the other accessibility and availability of food to everyone without any discrimination. Hence there is an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to food for every citizen of India.

The concept of right to food is multidimensional as it is connected to access to land, right to work, nutrition, right to water, education, agricultural policies and so on. By recognizing such interconnectedness among all

¹ Azquotes, https://www.azquotes.com/quote/721734?ref=ending-hunger#google_vignette, (last visited Nov.7,2023)

² Durga Das Basu, *Constitutional Law of India*, 7th Edition

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areas the government fashion policies and schemes.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

- 1) To study the steps by government to realize right to food of people in India.
- 2) To analyze the implementation of policies related to right to food.
- 3) To focus on the participation of the United Nations to support the government programme.
- 4) To analyze the National Food Security Act, 2013

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this paper the investigator highlighted important questions related to steps taken by the government to ensure right to food and food security of different categories of people. The research questions are

- 1) What are the steps taken by the Indian government to realize right to food?
- 2) What is the national strategy for implementation of food policy to attain human right to food ?
- 3) How international organizations are working in India to ensure entitlement of food for everyone?

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The 2023 Report of Global Hunger Index placed India in 111th position where 125 countries of the world were in the list. Though this Report has been negated by the government of India still there exist hunger and malnutrition. India has achieved agricultural growth long back after independence. There is no scarcity of food grains in India. As food is the most essential part of life it is considered as a human right. Every people have a right to have two square meals per day with dignity. It becomes the responsibility of the government to ensure and assure right to food for everyone. The Constitution of India did not explicitly declare right to food as fundamental but it is a justiciable right. Therefore Indian government embraces lots of plans and strategies to make food available for all. International Conventions, Goals and Declaration has a wide impact on such policies as India is signatory. India has adopted policies and schemes in the line of International Conventions but still there exists cases of hunger, starvation and malnutrition. Therefore this article focused on the initiative taken by government in form of legislation and implementation.

METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

To understand the legislative measures adopted by the government of India to guarantee food for all especially the vulnerable section of the society which includes Priority group people along with the Antyodaya Anna Yojana beneficiaries requires a wide span of study. The study on implementation of the Act requires empirical study while the concept on right to food involves doctrinal study. This article “Steps towards Achieving Right to Food in India –An Analysis on Government Initiative” involves a blended study of both doctrinal as well as empirical. Data collected for doctrinal purpose includes secondary data such as government schemes, policies, e-books, research articles, books by authors of national and international repute, law commission reports, reports and guidelines by the Food and Agriculture Organization, relevant International Conventions and Declarations, news paper reports and government reports along with internet sources and news paper publications. Primary data is collected by sending questionnaires to different beneficiaries and government officials.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

To achieve the basic right of food for every one institutional setting becomes very appropriate. A institutional structure and legal strategies works perfectly when there is less overlapping, duplication or gaps.³ Social security means protection of individual and households to access to health care, guarantee income, which includes pension scheme, work injury, unemployment to name a few. Right to food is also encompassed within social security. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) finds out certain steps to be implemented by the government for the promotion of right to food at national level. The steps suggested by FAO are the identification of beneficiaries, assessing legislative policy and budget related to it, development of strategies and plans relating to food security along with the monitoring mechanism,

³ Socialprotections-humanrights.org,(last visited May 1, 2018)

coordination among the organizations (government as well as non government) , role of judiciary to check any violation of such right and the Constitutional mandate .⁴ In the line of such guidelines , government of India has enacted The National Food Security Act, 2013 and pass various policies.

Before such implementation of the schemes and policies government has designed action plans to achieve the desired goals.⁵

SCHEMES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Just after independence in 1947, India was struggling with food crisis and poverty. The reasons for such crisis can be connected to terrible famines which occurred in India before independence. Therefore to tackle the situation of food crisis and issues of poverty the then government adopted different mechanism and poverty alleviation programmes. In 1947 the Food Grain Committee under the Chairmanship of Purushottamdas Thakurdas was constituted to analyze food grain position, productivity, distribution and procurement in coming five years. The Committee recommended for attainment of self sufficiency.⁶ Again in 1950 Food Grain Committee was set up and the Committee recommended reduces in confusion regarding acquirement and distribution of food grains.⁷

Independent India started Five Years Plans in 1951 where first five years plans focused on agricultural growth. Accordingly twelve five years plans were adopted in India with different objectives and in 2015 Five Years Plans were replaced by Three Year Action Plan .NITI Aayog replaced the Planning Commission and its role is to provide guide map to government for policy making. The Planning Commission worked for the improvement of economy, industrial growth and agricultural growth. ⁸ Since Independence government of India has adopted many schemes and policies to ensure food for everyone especially the poor and vulnerable section of the society. There are many schemes for example Employment Assurance Scheme, 1993⁹, Wheat Based Nutrition Programme, 1986¹⁰, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005¹¹, Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG), 2010¹², Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, 2014¹³ etc. which are related to the employment, nutrition and agriculture that are related to right to food of people.

⁴ Historical perspective of food management in India, [www.fao.org>docrep](http://www.fao.org/docrep), (last visited June 23, 2019)

⁵ <https://bettercarenetwork.org>, (last visited Sep. 7, 2022)

⁶ Historical perspective of food management in India, Available at [www.fao.org>docrep](http://www.fao.org/docrep) (last visited June 24, 20 19)

⁷ ibid

⁸ <https://www.jagranjosh.com>, last visited Sept. 8, 2022)

⁹ This scheme is adopted to help rural poor people who have no work other than seasonal agriculture. Hundred days of works are assured for maximum two numbers of adult in a family for a casual manual employment. District Collector selected works and implemented through proper departments. This scheme was restructured in 1999, available at [agritech.tnau.ac.in>agriculture>agri...](http://agritech.tnau.ac.in/agriculture/agri...), (accessed on 31.10.2018 at 2.29pm)

¹⁰ This centrally sponsored programme is launched with the objective to provide supplementary nutrition to preschool children, pregnant and lactating mother .Now this is included under Integrated Child Development Scheme. Though previously some states like Arunachal Pradesh, Delhi, Bihar, Chandigarh Administration, Lakshadweep, Union Territory of Daman & Diu and Puduchery including Assam could not get allocation under this scheme but now all states get allocation, available at healthtrip.com, (accessed on 20.6.19 at 9.32 am)

¹¹ To secure livelihood in rural areas National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 was enacted and later renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). As right to food is related with right to work so by guaranteeing right to work under this scheme right to food is tried to be secured. Under this scheme at least hundred days of wage employment is provided to adult members per family and minimum wages are paid. This is one of the most ambitious social security programme in the world. Even the World Bank in its report (World Development Report 2014) termed it a “stellar example of rural development”, <https://www.2thepoint.in/list-of-goi-schemes/>, (last visited Mar. 28, 2018)

¹² This is the nutrition, health and hygiene programme for drop out school girls between the age of eleven to fourteen years. The adolescent girls of these specific age groups have to register themselves to get nutritious food in the form of hot cooked meal or take home ration. This scheme is implemented through anganwari centres. In 2021 this scheme was included under Poshan Mission , Scheme for Adolescent Girls(SAG) <https://byjus.com>, (last visited Oct. 20, 2022)

¹³ Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFSY) was launched by the Government to relief farmers who have taken loans from bank. The scheme aims to support farmers who suffered crop loss or damage due to various reasons and stabilize income of farmers so that they can adopt new techniques in farming thus contributing to food security. This scheme is compulsory for farmers who have taken loans and optional for non loanee farmers, agriinsurance.com, (last visited Feb. 27, 2019)

Midday Meal Scheme, 1995

To retain children of poor families in school and reduce drop out, government of India started Mid-Day Meal Scheme in 1995. Another objective of this scheme is to enhance nutrition level of the poor kids by providing nutritious cooked food to them in schools. This is a centrally sponsored scheme and history of this scheme can be traced back during British period in 1925 in Madras Corporation. In 1928 and 1930 also Calcutta and Karnataka government started midday tiffin in school on payment respectively.¹⁴ Therefore mid day meal concept was not new to India. Even after independence many states had adopted this scheme. Finally in 1995 government initiated mid day meal scheme as centrally sponsored for the nutritional development of children from class one to eight. Later on children studying under Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) centers and madrasahs were also covered. This scheme carried out throughout the country in 1997-98. Cooked meals are provided under this scheme. The central government is wholly responsible for the cost of food grains, transportation, management and monitoring under this scheme. The cooking cost is shared by central as well as state government.¹⁵ After implementation of the National Food Security Act in 2013, mid day meal scheme covered under the Act and government notified Mid Day Meal Rules, 2015. Under this Rule, if government failed to supply for any reason food to children then food security allowance has to be paid to the beneficiaries.

Mid Day Meal programme is to a large extent successful to provide food and nutritional requirement of children of poor section of society and also could reduce traditional and social prejudices in society.¹⁶

Deen Dayal Upadhaya Antyodaya Yojana, 2014

Deen Dayal Upadhaya Antyodaya Yojana (DAY) is a Mission which targets poor people from the rural as well as urban area to provide livelihood skills training.¹⁷ Scheme supported for livelihood implementing strategy like farm livelihood which include organic farming, milk production by mahila kisan. Livelihood is one of the most important component of right to food. By imparting skills and creating the opportunity for livelihood with Make in India concept, this scheme has helped to achieve right to food of people.

Emergency Feeding Programme (EFP)

This programme is particularly designed to ensure food for people of remote Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput (KBK) districts in Odisha. As this was the most backward and remote region in the whole country the people are in starvation and poverty. To provide them with proper nutritious food under this scheme one meal of cooked food are served with rice, pulses and vegetables.¹⁸

Public Distribution System, 1947

India's Public Distribution System is one of the largest network for distribution of food grains to the poor people at subsidized rate.¹⁹ This programme started in India by British during the period of World War II.²⁰ Due to World War II India could not import rice and there exist condition of food scarcity. Through this scheme food grains were procured from high yielding places and distributed to the place of scarcity with rationing system. By this system government managed the food scarcity situation and with time this became an integral part of food distribution policy. Public Distribution System in India developed during 1939. At that time the British government targeted only those places with food scarcity for distribution of grains.²¹ Even after independence the distribution of grains under the public distribution system was totally dependent on the rice and wheat imported from other country²². With the pioneer of Green Revolution in India, M.S

¹⁴ <http://www.allresearchjournal.com/archives/2016/vol2issue5/PartA/2-4-110.1-526.pdf>, (last visited Apr. 3, 2018)

¹⁵ ibid

¹⁶ Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG), <https://byjus.com> (last visited Oct. 20, 2022)

¹⁷ Anjana Dhand, Deen Dayal Upadhaya Antyodaya Yojana, scripbox.com (last visited Nov. 22, 2023)

¹⁸ Food Schemes in India, <https://www.scoopwhoop.com/inothernews/food-schemes-in-india/>, (last visited Sep. 27, 2018)

¹⁹ Schemes to Systems/The Public Distribution System: Anatomy of India's Food Subsidy Reforms, <https://www.worldbank.org/> (last visited Nov. 22, 2023)

²⁰ Sakshi Balani, Functioning of the Public Distribution system: An Analytical Report, <https://www.prsindia.org/> (last visited June 8, 2019)

²¹ Public Distribution System in India – evolution, efficacy and need for reforms, www.fao.org (last visited Nov. 23, 2023)

²² India food policy, <https://www.ispepune.org.in/> (last visited May 16, 2019)

Swaminathan, India could able to shed of the dependency on imported food grains and there was a record yield of food grains during 1967-68. Green Revolution only enabled India to maintain buffer stock of grains and thus led to the establishment of Food Corporation of India for smooth distribution of food grains at subsidized rate.²³ The distribution of essential items like rice, wheat and sugar were started through Public Distribution System where people collected these through ration shops or cooperative societies. Apart from these items kerosene oil as well as edible oils were also distributed to relieve poor people from sky rocketing price hike. Though Public Distribution System was to benefit the poor section of society but initially all categories of people availed subsidized food grains and essential items from ration shops. Government collect food grains at a rate higher than the market price from the farmers which is called minimum support price (MSP) and through Food Corporation of India (FCI) distributes to various States. The huge responsibility of procurement, allotment, storage and transportation lies on the Food Corporation of India. All categories of people were benefited from PDS till 1992. To make the PDS more streamlined and beneficiary oriented government in the year 1992 launched the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS). This system covered the poor people of remote hilly areas who have less accessibility to food grains. Specific programmes were designed by central government such as Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP), Desert Development Programme (DDP) to improve public Distribution System. Under Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) beneficiaries were eligible to collect twenty kilogram of food grains per card.²⁴

Targetted Public Distribution System, 1997

There were certain anomalies in public distribution system (PDS) and therefore government introduced Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in June 1997. Under this system poor beneficiaries were identified by the state government as per poverty estimation by state. Proper identification of beneficiaries were very important for the distribution of subsidized food grains.

This TPDS was run by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Govt. of India.²⁵ Targetted Public Distribution System introduced two categories of people one is people below poverty line (BPL) and another is people above poverty line (APL).²⁶ New scheme ensured food grains at subsidized rate for the BPL and APL people would take food grains at a price higher than the price fixed for BPL people. Later on government increased the amount of food grains for BPL people from ten kilograms to Twenty Kilograms per family in every month. Another category of poor people were introduced as beneficiary under the Targetted Public Distribution System who are the poorest of poor known as Antyodaya families. There was a scheme called Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) which was launched in 2000 to provide wheat for rupees two per kilogram and rice at rupees three per kilogram.

But enactment of the National Food Security Act in the 2013 included all beneficiaries of TPDS and the Act changed coverage, entitlement and distribution to a great extent.²⁷ Now under Section 12 of the National Food Security Act, the Targetted Public Distribution System got reformed under Section 12 of the National Food Security Act.

Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), 1975

As every person has a human right to live and food is the basic right so the government of India initiated a Scheme for children in 1975 to provide them nutritional benefit and health care along with other developmental programme. This early childhood programme targeted children of age group between 0 to 6 years. The Anganwadi centres are set up to provide non formal preschool education to toddlers, health check ups, immunization and supplementary nutrition to children upto 6 years age. ICDS also target the nutrition and health of pregnant as well as lactating mothers to reduce child mortality. Under this schemes pregnant

²³ <https://www.civilserviceindia.com/>, (last visited June 8, 2019)

²⁴ Public Distribution, <https://dfpd.gov.in/public-distribution.htm> (last visited Jan. 31, 2019)

²⁵ <https://www.jagranjosh.com>targetted...> (last visited Oct. 31, 2018)

²⁶ Public Distribution, <https://dfpd.gov.in/public-distribution.htm> (last visited Jan. 31, 2019)

²⁷ dfpd.nic.in>public-distribution, (last visited Oct. 31, 2018)

and lactating mothers can get supplementary feeding support from anganwadi centres. Also the women between the age group of 15 to 45 years gets nutrition , health education under ICDS.²⁸ Under ICDS hot cooked food containing rice, pulses and vegetables are served to the children and lactating mothers.²⁹ There are also provisions for the 'take away food' and 'ready to eat meal' for some centers.³⁰ In 1975 this programme started covering 33 blocks of urban, rural and tribal dominated areas. Over 89 million mothers and children have received benefits from Integrated Child Development Scheme in India during the financial year of 2021.³¹ The whole package of health, nutrition and pre school education of children has now become the part of Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26. Though it is the ambitious programme to enhance nutrition and education still due to lack of proper infrastructure, irregular supply, corruption , lack of curriculum material, poor monitoring system and multi tasking of anganwadi workers has imposed challenges for the proper implementation of such beneficial programme.³² Now ICDS is covered under the broad umbrella of the National Food Security Act, 2013.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana, 2000

Another scheme for the very poor people in India is the Antyodaya Anna Yojana, which was launched to provide food grains at the highly subsidized rate. The families under this scheme were given separate ration cards known as "Antyodaya Ration Card" and they are eligible to get wheat for rupees two per Kilogram, rice for rupees three per Kilogram and sugar at the rate of rupees 18.50 per Kilogram through the ration shops. The beneficiary family would get 35 Kilogram of rice per month.³³ Beneficiaries for this scheme is identified by the government from rural areas as well as from urban slum areas and they included families of rural areas earning up to rupees 15,000/ per year, old age pensioners, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers without any land, physically handicapped persons , destitute widows, rural artisans or craftsmen. In urban areas too family earning rupees 15,000/ per year, slum dwellers, daily wagers like rickshaw pullers, porters, fruits and vegetables seller on pavements, domestic servants, construction workers, widows or disabled persons who are the head of the families aged 60 years or more with no means of subsistence and support and other kinds of earners like snake charmers, rag pickers, cobblers are entitled to get benefit under Antyodaya Anna Yojana.³⁴

National Food Security Mission (NFSM), 2007-08

Food security of people depends on growth and increased productivity of food grains . Such growth in food grains creates employment opportunity, farm profits. This scheme was introduced in the year 2007 with an aim to expand food productivity, growth in economy and restore confidence of farmers. So the increased production of rice, wheat and pulses up to 10 million, 8 million and 2 million tons respectively was the main aim of the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) by the end of the Eleventh Plan that is by 2012. The scheme has three Missions within it which are as National Food Security Mission - Rice (NFSM-Rice), National Food Security Mission - Wheat (NFSM-Wheat) and National Food Security Mission - Pulses (NFSM Pulses). As the Mission was tremendously successful in production of rice, wheat and pulses, so it continued with new targets till the end of 12th Five Years Plan.³⁵

SABLA Scheme, 2010

To empower the girls between the age of eleven to eighteen years by improving their health and nutrition level SABLA scheme was launched. This scheme is called Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)- SABLA , which started in the year 2010 initially in 200 districts . The other existed schemes that are Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY) and Integrated Child Development Service Scheme

²⁸ Integrated Child development Services, <https://wcd.nic.in> (last visited Nov. 25,2023)

²⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4925843/>, (last visited Nov. 1,2018)

³⁰ ibid

³¹ Number of beneficiaries under ICDS India FY2016-2021, <https://www.statista.com>, (last visited Nov. 27, 2023)

³² Strengthening ICDS, <https://www.drishtias.com> (last visited Nov. 27, 2023)

³³ <https://www.indiafilings.com> last visited June 24, 2019)

³⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4925843/> (last visited Nov. 1,2018)

³⁵ National Food Security Mission, <https://www.nfsm.gov.in> (last visited Nov. 27,2023)

(ICDS) get merged with SABLA.³⁶

National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyan), 2018

POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched to attain good health and improvement of nutritional status of children between the age group of zero to six years, adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women. This National Nutrition Mission (NNM) aims to reduce stunting, wasting in children, mal nutrition, and anaemia.³⁷ This Abhiyan had a mission to make India free from malnutrition by 2022. So National Nutrition Mission (NNM) has a intense monitoring system, Convergence Action Plan, Jan andolan. To improve further the aims of POSHAN, POSHAN2.0 was launched in 2021 with a same motive to tackle problems of mal nourishment and deficiency among children and . POSHAN 2.0 bridges Anganwadi services, Schemes for Adolescent Girls, Poshan Abhiyan and nutritional programs.³⁸

Five Years Plans

After independence, for the up liftmen of economy, social welfare, poverty alleviation and growth in industrialization Five Years Plans were initiated by government of India in the year 1951.³⁹ Apart from all other schemes and policies to ensure right to food of people, these Five Years Plans have the most importance . The plans such as the 5th five year plan (1974 to1979), 7th five year plan (1985-1990), the 9th five year plan (1997-2002), 10th five year plan (2002-2007), 11th five year plan (2007-2012) and 12th five year plan (2012- 2017) are the most vital plans which emphasized on agricultural growth, development and poverty alleviation. These are directly related to the right to food of people.

National Food Security Act, 2013

The government of India enacted the National Food Security Act in the year 2013 to ensure at least two times food to poor people in India. The Act aims to cover approximately two thirds of India's population. The social security schemes such as Mid Day Meal, Targeted Public distribution and, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) came under the broad umbrella of National Food Security Act. Therefore after implementation of the Act all those schemes become legal entitlements of the beneficiaries. Special focus of the Act is to provide food grains at subsidized rate so that it becomes easily available and accessible.⁴⁰

The National Food Security Act which is also known as the Right to Food Act includes up to 75% of the rural population and up to 50% of the urban population as the beneficiaries to get food grains at subsidized rate. All the beneficiaries are entitled to receive rice at rupees three per kilogram, wheat at rupees two per kilogram and coarse grains (millet) at rupees one per kilogram. Pregnant women, lactating mothers, and certain categories of children (age group between 6 months to 14 years) are eligible for daily free meals.⁴¹ Whereas those belongs to AAY group continued to receive 35 kilogram food grains per family in every month. The Act has a provision for food security allowances also where there is non supply of meals under MDM Scheme or food grains under TPDS.⁴²

Assam government implemented this Act on 24th December 2015.

Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM- PDS), 2018

This scheme aims to make easy access of food grains by beneficiaries under Targeted Public Distribution System. The beneficiaries by using ration cards can collect their entitlements from any fair price shop within

³⁶ <http://www.nihfw.org/doc/drPrema%20Ramachandran.pdf>, (last visited June 25,2019)

³⁷ <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=181786>, (last visited Oct. 31, .2018)

³⁸ POSHAN ABHIYAAN- Narayana Medical College, [https:// www.narayanamedical college .com](https://www.narayanamedicalcollege.com) (last visited Nov. 2,2023)

³⁹ Five Years Plans of India List., <https://www.studyiq.com>, (last visited Nov. 27, 2023)

⁴⁰ Dan Banik, The Hungry Nation : Food Policy and Food Politics in India, Food Ethics, June2016, Vol.1 , Issue1, (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41055-016-0001-1>, (last visited July 23, 2019)

⁴¹ ibid

⁴² National food Security Act(NFSA), <https://dfpd.gov.in>, (last visited Aug. 17, 2020)

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the country after authentication of biometrics in the fair price shop. Thus making portability of ration cards would benefit poor workers.⁴³

One Nation One Ration Card, 2019

One of the most important schemes for migrant workers is the One Nation One Ration Card. This scheme permits the migrant workers who migrate from one state to another for their livelihood and who are the beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act, 2013 to avail the subsidized food grains from fair price shop within the country. Beneficiaries names are registered in the government data base as soon as adhar card of such person is linked with the ration card .

The One Nation One Ration Card is a scheme is launched to provide food security to those workers who migrate from one state to another in search of work. Under this scheme, the workers who are beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act, 2013 can collect subsidized foodgrains under the Public Distribution System across the country. When a beneficiary's Aadhar card is linked to the ration card his name was enrolled in the government database. The Government of India provides for the technological platform for the interstate as well as intra- state portability of ration cards. Two governmental portals are active to provide technological platform for inter state and intra state portability. Without carrying the ration card physically but by only putting biometrics in ePoS machine , installed in fair shops , the migrant workers and their family members can collect subsidized food grains . Each one can get his share from fair price shops.⁴⁴ A standard ration card with ten digit number is provided to migrant workers and that digit is verified by the ePoS device to authenticate identity of the worker. To make the allotment hassle free the standard ration card is bi lingual with local language and Hindi or English as well as it has the Sate Code of the holder.⁴⁵

Schemes and policies under Government of Assam

Assam implemented the National Food Security Act in the year 2015 to provide subsidized rice as well as subsidized kerosene oil to 84.17% of rural and 60.35% of urban population of Assam. Even before implementation of this Act to provide free meals or distribute food items at affordable price, there were certain schemes such as the Public Distribution System Scheme, Targeted Public Distribution Scheme, Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Mukhya Mantri Anna Suraksha Yojana (MMASY). Different categories of people from the society were benefited from these schemes.⁴⁶ In Assam a total people of 2.52 crore are benefited under the National Food Security Act, 2013.

By enacting the Act, the beneficiary categories has been reduced to Priority House Hold (PHH) and Antyodaya (AAY) Family. Under this Act ration card holders are the female adult person of the family and when there is no major female member then only male member of the family become the ration card holder. In Assam the digitalization of fair price shops and link of aadhar with ration cards has started. To stop corruption and siphoning away of entitlements the digitalization is the most important feature of this Act. Transparency is created under this Act.⁴⁷ Apart from the Act, for tea garden beneficiaries another scheme is launched by the Government of Assam in 2019, named Affordable Nutrition & Nourishment Assistance (ANNA) to provide rice to tea garden beneficiaries at free of cost.⁴⁸

Empirical Study on Implementation of the Act in Guwahati (Metropolitan) area

The National Food Security Act, 2013 as an ambitious Act by the government of India has sought to remove corruption and make the distribution of subsidized food grains to beneficiaries more transparent. To have the real understanding on the implementation, an empirical study has been taken by framing questionnaire for government officials and questions for the beneficiaries in the Guwahati (Metropolitan) Area.

⁴³IM-PDS for portability of RCs, <https://dfpd.gov.in/last> visited Aug. 17.,2020)

⁴⁴ <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/one-nation-one-ration-card-system-explained-6410179/>, (last visited Aug. 1.,2020)

⁴⁵ <https://dfpd.gov.in/last> visited Aug. 17,2020)

⁴⁶ ibid

⁴⁷ ibid

⁴⁸ <https://directorfcassam.gov.in/> (last visited Feb.17, 2020)

Questions asked to the beneficiaries in the Guwahati (Metropolitan) area gave the understanding that 70% beneficiaries have ration cards while 30% do not have. But the Ration cards are Important documents to avail food grains as well as Kerosene oil at subsidized rate from the fair price shops. 30% beneficiaries who do not have ration cards are deprived from the government benefits when they need it the most.

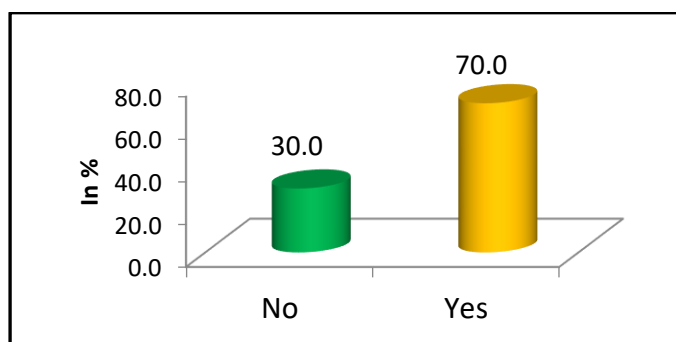


Diagram: 1

Among these 70% beneficiaries having ration cards revealed in their answer that they are aware of their entitlements under the National Food Security Act. Those 30% who don't have ration cards need not to answer this question. Surprisingly 1% beneficiaries are not aware of their monthly entitlements. Unawareness even if for the 1% leads to the impression that there are chances of corruption at the end of the Fair Price Shops.

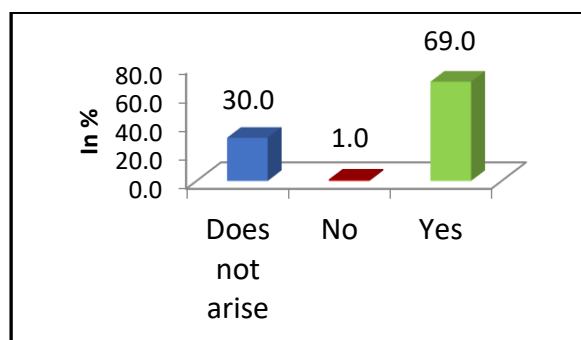


Diagram:2

Another question which is very important for the proper implementation of the Act related to the digitalization of fair price shops, those 70% card holders revealed that in Guwahati Metropolitan area Fair Price Shops are not digitalized. This creates the chances of corruption, lack of transparency at the end of fair price shops.

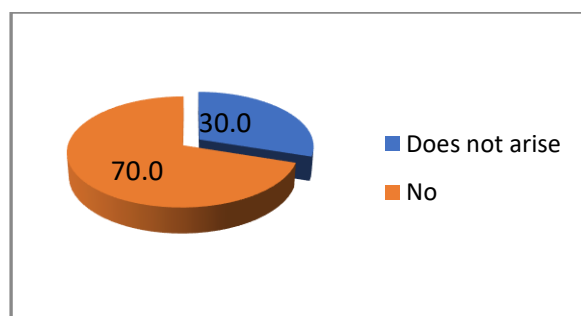


Diagram: 3

A question was asked to know whether in fair price shops food grains and kerosene oil are available so that the beneficiaries can collect at any time. 64% of the beneficiaries have given positive answer whereas 6% beneficiaries responded negative. For 6% beneficiaries subsidized items are available in the beginning of the

month and if they fail to collect on time they would not get the subsidized items. This is a matter of concern as without subsidized food grains they might live in hunger.

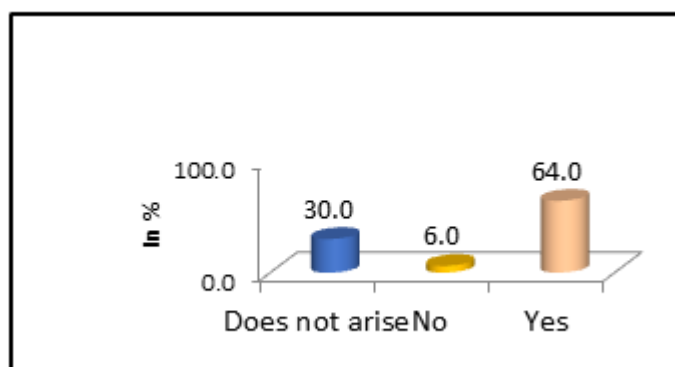


Diagram: 4

To redress grievance of beneficiaries, grievance redressal authorities are set up under this Act. When asked about such authority to approach, 65% beneficiaries showed ignorance. Only 5% of beneficiaries have heard about the authority but not aware of the procedure to approach.

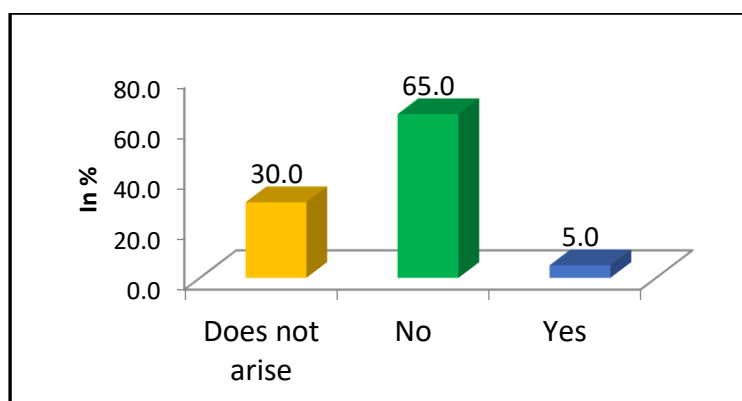


Diagram: 5

In respond to different questions put forwarded to government officials of different rank to understand the real implementation of the Act, they have revealed that in Assam beneficiaries are selected on the basis of 2011 census and the Act covered 84.17% of rural population and 60.35% of urban population . They have responded in affirmation that all the identified beneficiaries have ration cards . When asked about the linking of aadhar card with ration card which is the most vital part of implementation , they said that the process has started. The digitalization of fair price shops is also at initial stage.

International support

United Nations

The United Nations assist India in developmental works in the line of Five Years Plans adopted by the government of India. The United Nations support India to scale up nutrition programmes for children, to improve household's access to food, up lift farm income, to strengthen agriculture and anti poverty programmes.⁴⁹ The Planning Commission of India has framed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) along with stakeholders and government ministries.⁵⁰

World Food Programme's Contribution: World Food Programme(WFP) has been involved with India since 1963.It supports India financially for the developmental programmes in the field of irrigation,

⁴⁹ Nutrition and Food Security/United nations in India, <https://indi.un.org>, (last visited Nov. 28, 2023)

⁵⁰ <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000040039/download/> (last visited Apr. 4,2018)

agriculture, forestry and rural development. It provided technical support also to reduce hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity.⁵¹ For the proper implementation of the National Food Security Act, WPF provides technical support.⁵² To achieve Sustainable Development Goals especially Goal 2 India has developed plans and the World Food Programme lending hands to achieve the desired goal of India.⁵³

Challenges and Suggestions

The government of India has adopted lots of schemes and policies to achieve right to food. To avail the new scheme of the Central Government that is One Nation One Ration Card, State Governments should take steps to make the data base of the proper beneficiaries by linking Aadhar with ration cards. All the fair price shops should be installed with the ePoS machines without fail. The linking of aadhar with the ration cards should be completed. Adequate storage facilities for food grains are very essential. Another important aspect to achieve right to food is the proper selection of beneficiaries. Only new census can find the proper beneficiary for the National Food Security Act, 2013. All the government schemes and policies which are related to right to food of a person like schemes on wage, employment, land reforms, pension, agriculture should be appropriately implemented. As the Act permits the States to adopt any new plans on nutrition and health of the beneficiaries the State government can encourage local farmers to grow seasonal fruits and vegetables, development of fisheries and dairy. Right execution of the National Food Security Act along with other schemes can only remove hunger and malnutrition from India.

CONCLUSION

India has adopted a large number of schemes and policies relating to food and some of them are the most ambitious programmes. People can avail required benefit from government schemes only when it is properly executed. In black and white though all the schemes related to food seems to be perfect to eradicate problem of hunger, malnutrition from India but in reality people are still facing hunger. Proper beneficiaries could not avail the benefit due to lack of proper implementation. India has faced many severe famines before independence and even after independence there were scarcity of food. India was dependant on imported food grains. Kudos to Green Revolution which made India self sufficient in food grains so much so that India could built buffer stock and distribute food grains to people at subsidized rate. At present India is economically powerful country, agricultural growth is satisfactory but still there exist hunger.

The reason for hunger and malnutrition can be attributed to lack of proper implementation of policy, poverty, corruption and leakage, wastage of food grains, lack of adequate storage system. The schemes like One Nation One Ration Card have potential to satisfy the need of poor beneficiaries. Government is working hard to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and uphold the right to food of every human being.

⁵¹ ibid

⁵² WPF boosts efforts to end hunger by 2030 with Indian Partnership, <https://www.un.org> (last visited Nov. 28, 2023)

⁵³ www.wfp.org/operations.., (last visited Oct. 23, 2020)