

Poverty and Food Security in India: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

India is a Poor country and More than 800 million people in India are considered poor. India is one of the world's top countries when it comes to hunger, malnutrition, and Food security. More than 200 million people don't have adequate access to food, including 61 million children. 7.8 million Infants were found to have a birth weight of less than 2.5 kilograms alarming figures for a country usually referred to as the rising market.. India has ranked 102 among 117 countries in the Global Hunger Index as it continues to slide down the rankings.

Keywords: Poverty Hunger, Undernourished Malnutrition, Food Security.

Introduction

"The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread."

- Mother Teresa

Poverty as a phenomenon has existed since the commencement of known history. But as centuries rolled by and populations increased, it began to appear on a mass scale. About 74 percent of India's population lives in villages so; the incidence of poverty is much higher in villages, roughly 39 percent of the rural population. The Poverty is that situation in which a person either due to his insufficient earnings or unwise expenditures does not maintain a scale of living high enough to give his physical and mental competence and to facilitate him and his natural dependents to function usually according to the standards of society.¹ Thus poverty is a condition of very lower standard of living in a country. In the Indian villages, agriculture is a main source of livelihood and 70 percent of the population but agriculture accounts for less than 40 percent of the national income. The unequal distribution of land, One of the reasons main for this because, 10 to 20 percent of land holders hold 70 percent of the total land and 50 percent of landholders are marginal farmers with less than one hectare of land. Therefore any programme for fighting against poverty should address itself to the rural sector. According to the IRDP definition, approved by the Ministry of rural development a rural household with an annual income less than Rs. 11,000/- is described as a poor household.²



Available

<https://www.google.co.in/search?q=poverty+in+india&sxsrf> Last visited June 11, 2020

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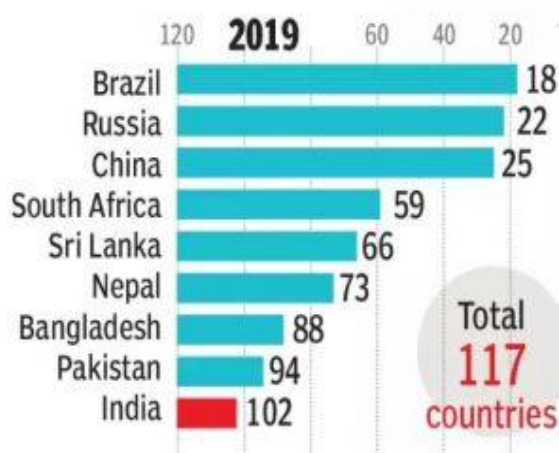
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India is a Poor country and More than 800 million people in India are considered poor. According to UN Development Programme released the 2019 global Poverty Index India has lifted 271 million people out of poverty between 2006 and 2016, recording the fastest reductions in the poverty index values during the period with strong improvements in areas such as assets, cooking fuel, sanitation and nutrition. India is one of the world's top countries when it comes to hunger, malnutrition, and Food security. More than 200 million people don't have adequate access to food, including 61 million children. 7.8 million Infants were found to have a birth weight of less than 2.5 kilograms alarming figures for a country usually referred to as the rising market. Food security entails ensuring enough food supply to people, especially those who are deprived of basic nutrition food. Food security has been a major concern in India since independence, According to United Nations there are nearly 195 million undernourished people in India, which is a quarter of the world's hunger burden, also roughly 43% children in India are chronically malnourished.³ India has ranked 102 among 117 countries in the Global Hunger Index as it continues to slide down the rankings.



Available at <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=latest+hunger+index+of+india&sxsrf> last visit on June 12, 2020

Research Methodology

The Sources of Researcher for data collection is Secondary i.e. library, government publishes sources, internet, news papers, etc. This can be done from different resources like Journals, Yearbooks, Books, Dictionaries, law Reviews, Newspapers and Judicial Pronouncements of Indian courts. As the topic is a nationwide implication and the majority of information is compiled by national level agencies and government departments, so the necessary data would be collected through this research method.

Objectives of the Study

The problem of food security is a very serious problem not only India, in whole world

also. In my research work I have mentioned some aims and objectives of my research work so that some new facts come into existence. My aim and objective of the study is to explore the hidden facts like why people are not equally rich. What are the reasons behind their poverty? Secondly to suggest the government machinery how much possible efforts should be made by the government so that poverty and the problem of food security should be minimize. My third and last aim is to create awareness among the masses. Without awareness among the masses these aims and objectives would not be fulfilled.

Food Security; Concept and Issues

Food security has both economic and physical dimensions; the earlier referring to economic access and the second to physical availability of food grains in sufficient quantities required for an active and healthy life.. Hence, one would expect the estimates of poverty and food insecurity to tally for any given reference year. However, the two sets of estimates could deviate for any other subsequent year for the following methodological reasons that is Estimates of poverty are based on economic measures of consumer expenses distributions with reference to a base year norm, where only the norm gets adjusted for percentage price changes and Deprivation in physical access to food are made in terms of physical quantities which respond to changes not only in prices, but also tastes and preferences as well as a host of other variables such as levels of living and facilities of infrastructural with reference to a regular base year.⁴ Hence, from a practical perspective, the estimates of poverty and food insecurity would not count for non-reference years leading to both food distribution programmes targeted with reference to monetary-measure based poverty estimates. This issue is correctly underlies and raised by the High Level Committees in India. If so, how to go about verifying the estimate underlying the Expert group study, single approach could be to change the food security norms downward take into consideration the ongoing structural changes in consumption preferences. Until 1993/94, cereal utilization, which is the significant wellspring of calorie admission for the Indian family, has expanded for the last two decile gatherings and declined for the best tolerant gathering in country All-India; urban All-India doesn't display such obvious examples; however extensively, oat utilization expanded fairly for the base meek gatherings and diminished for the top resigned gatherings. This result hold a good for the majority of the states, except Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab and Delhi. Hence, any shortfall in cereal consumption/calorie intake could be by choice and does not call for policy measures for income transfers by subsidized food distribution. In other words, estimation of food security may be worked out with reference to alternative norms,

viz., the norm underlying the evaluation of the official poverty line, and the meeting levels observed in 1993/94. Since the relevant adult equal scale are available only for calorie necessities this study could make such corrections only for calorie intake.⁵

The assumption is based on findings related to these measures., Much of the policy effort of the Government of India to mitigate food insecurity runs in terms of augmenting physical access through a comprehensive agricultural policy to promote agricultural and food grain production; and buffer stocks like the PDS selling cereals at subsidized prices.⁵ An estimate of the degree of food grain / cereal consumption shortfall has definite implication for such policies to promote physical access to food grains and their sustainability. Calorie is a major nutrient required for day to day functioning. Without calorie adequacy, protein intake is not of much use.⁶ Incidence of protein deficiency is much less than that of calorie deficiency. The probable incidence of protein insufficiency with reference to a common norm of 50 gm per capita per day is about 20 per cent. Consumption pattern of the Indian population has undergone some diversification in favor of non-food items; diversity is an important indicator of food security and requirement for nutrition security. Any attempt to define food security only with reference to food/cereal consumption would involve over inference and disregard of associated policies for nutrition security. In reality, the Government of India has an agenda to promote nutrition security by a variety of schemes. Government of India has expanded many of its welfare schemes with a change in plan in favor of the food grain transfer. For instance, Antyodaya, Annapurna and mid-day meal schemes of policies and programmes for income generation, sanitary environment, adequate health services and awareness creation.⁷

India and Its Food Security Challenges

Food security is the back bone of national prosperity and well being of the country, any nation's health of is directly linked to food security. According to national food security Act, 2013 Food security means availability of food and access to it. A family is considered to be food secure when its members do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. According to FAO Food Security means "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to adequate, safe and healthy food to meet their nutritional needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". In food consumption levels and poverty there is direct relationship. In mid 1990s, 30 million people in India have been added to the rank of hungry since then and 40% children are underweight. Worldwide 852 million people are hungry due to extreme poverty and 2 billion people lack food security intermittently due to varying degree of poverty 600 million children die of hunger every year and 17000 every day.⁸

Current data is very much shocking and situation is going even worse because in India approximately, 320 Indians go to bed without food every night. In many countries of the world food riots have taken and to maintain food security is becoming very difficult. In the context of rural India, agriculture development for small and marginal farmer is the most important dimension of food security. There is need to diversification of agriculture for food e.g., cereals, pulses, edible oil yielding, vegetable, fuel & timber yielding plants, medicinal and fodder crops which are necessary to meet the food, augment income to farmers and to meet the food security. Natural vagaries like excessive rainfall, drought, and availability of water for irrigation, undulating topography, soil erosion, and soil type such as degraded soil, acidic & alkaline soil affect the food security.⁹ The problem of food distribution is a big so, PDS (Public Distribution System) is not satisfactorily functioning in our country. That is the main reason, the families are very poor within adequate income cannot escape food crisis. It is anticipation regarding Globalization, may and may not help food security. However, there are some people who think that globalization will certainly help food security because of trade but it's matter of debate now. Our aim will be at food security in developing countries through increased and stabilized food production on an economically and environmentally sustainable technologies/ methods, so diversification in agriculture is highly essential. The food industry and business of making food appear appealing and attractive often spoils the quality of what we eat. If we make the nation healthy, every citizen must be able to buy food that is free from contamination. It is necessary to involve a comprehensive process and involving testing facilities or laboratories even in the villages. We should have a food safety project that makes what we eat wholesome. Food security cannot be assured merely by the provision of a certain quantity of grain to each family but by ensuring that every grain that is distributed is wholesome and nutritious, and not toxic. The philosophy of food safety is a composite one, beyond merely making grain available physically needed measures. We should have a state-sponsored food safety institution that it has branches across each State, with equipment so that it can test food safety. We must have empowered force of trained food safety personnel should visit eateries, food stores, even festival venues where food is served, and take action where adulteration or contamination is detected through scientific means.¹⁰

India's efforts to achieve food security in Independent India has overcome the problems of famines and mass deaths due to starvation, thanks to the focus given to agriculture, mainly, in the production of cereals. Today, the country produces 104 million tons of rice and 93 million

tons of wheat annually, which is more than sufficient to meet the requirements of a widespread Public Distribution System (PDS), distributing cereals at highly subsidised prices. It is not the intention of this paper to go over the details of the Green Revolution and the success in agriculture, which resolved the problem of production. It focuses, rather, on the efforts for the distribution of grains to ensure food security for all, and the problems faced therein. First, a brief summary, of how the PDS came into being and its evolution into a Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), culminating recently in the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which confers the right to food on citizens, shall be given. Subsequent sections shall outline the problems faced by the PDS, and the issues which are yet to be resolved.¹¹ The measures in place in India are as under: The Public Distribution System, which was initially started as a system to manage food scarcity in the 1940s, has evolved into a system for the distribution of food grains at affordable prices, and is an important part of the government's policy for food management. The main objectives of food management are: the procurement of food grains from the farmers at remunerative prices; the distribution of food grains to the consumers, particularly, the vulnerable sections of society, at affordable prices; and, the maintenance of food buffers for food security and price stability. The PDS is supplemental in nature, i.e. it is not intended to make available the entire requirement of any commodity distributed to a household. The PDS is operated as a joint responsibility of the state and central governments. The central government, through the Food Corporation of India (FCI), has the responsibility for the procurement, storage, transportation and the bulk allocation of food grains to the state governments. In order to fulfill following objectives of the Food Policy, The Food Corporation of India was established under the Food Corporation Act 1964.¹²

Government of India's Plan and Policies on Food Security

To increase the country's gross irrigated area from 90 million hectares to 103 million hectares by 2017 government of India had started, The National Food Security Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), the Integrated Schemes on Oilseeds, Pulses, Palm oil and Maize (ISOPOM), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, the e-marketplace, together with a massive irrigation and soil and water harvesting programme. The government has also taken important steps to combat under malnutrition over the past two decades, such as through the introduction of mid-day meals at schools, anganwadi systems to give rations to pregnant and lactating mothers, and subsidised food grain to the people who are living below the poverty line through a public distribution system. The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, aims to guarantee food and nutrition security for the most vulnerable

through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.¹³

Role of Judiciary and Food Security

In the case of PUCL v. Union of India¹⁴ and Others the Supreme Court ordered the establishment of a central vigilance committee for public distribution system (PDS), chaired by a retired Supreme Court judge and assisted by court commission in the right to food case. The committee mandate was to look into the maladies affecting the proper functioning of the public distribution service. The right to Food ensures opportunity from hunger and access to secure and nutritious food. A number of key human rights principles are fundamental to guaranteeing the right to food.¹⁵ The right to food is a very important human right that, if deprived of, render human life stunt, hurting, or worthless. A important step was taken by the Supreme Court in escalating the scope of Article 21 when it observed that 'right to life does not simply denote 'animal existence' but living with 'human dignity' which incorporate the right to the basic necessities of life and also the right to carry on such function and activities as constitute the bare lowest expression of the human self.' Another wide promulgation of the right to life with dignity is establish in Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India.¹⁶ The Court said that to live with human dignity means free from misuse. It include safety of health and strength of workers, men and women, and of the tender age of the children against mistreatment, opportunity and facilities for children to develop in a healthy way and in condition of freedom and dignity, educational facilities, just and humane condition of work and maternity relief. These are the minimum condition which should exist in order to permit a person to live with human dignity. No government can take any action to deprive a person of the enjoyment of these basic human rights.

The Supreme Court in Chameli Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh¹⁷ the court said that the need for a educated and civilized life includes the right to food, water and decent environment. The court said in this connection: "In any planned society, the right to live as a human being is not ensure by meeting only the animal needs of man. It is protected only when he is guaranteed of all facilities to himself and is free from limits which restrain his growth. All human rights are intended to attain this object. In Kishen Pattnayak and ors. v. State of Orrisa¹⁸, It was alleged that the people of Kalahandi, Koraput and other districts of Orissa, there are many people dying there due to hunger. According to Justice P.N Bhagavathi No individual in this country can be permitted to endure deprivation and exploitation, mainly when social justice is the motto of our Constitution'. The Supreme Court of India has establish itself as a supporter of food security and commit itself to the recognition of the right to food in India. Through its landmark judgment in the public interest litigation, People's Union for civil liberty

v.union of India¹⁹ The media can play a significant role to provide early warning information of future crises and thereafter hold the authorities to account for their failure to accumulate an correct and suitable response. Though India have a free press, it does not, however, show that newspapers are necessarily always interested in covering the plight of those starving in an object manner. Indeed, the influence of the press is also highly dependent on the working conditions of journalists.

Following the news of starvation death in the state of Rajasthan in 2000–2001 in spite of an plenty of food available in government storeroom houses, the People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) a union of 56 civil society organisations decided to take the help of the Indian judiciary, which has been broadly highly praised for developing innovative jurisprudence on economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights.²⁰ In particular, PUCL made use of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) which has become an very popular way for civil society to examine the actions of the government. The main function of courts in India relate to 'judicial review', according to which the Constitution empower the judiciary to defend the fundamental human rights of citizens and to interfere when legislative and executive actions are found to be unconstitutional. In the past few decades, the Indian judiciary has been increasingly willing to done an activist garb following the decision of the Supreme Court to accept litigation that address the matters in which large interest of the public is involved. Such PIL petitions can be moved by any person or group of persons to highlight the issue of public importance for invoke this jurisdiction. Through an open focus on human rights, the PUCL submit a PIL to the Supreme Court in April 2001 questioning whether the right to life guaranteed under article 21 of the Indian Constitution also includes the right to food. By the means of the human rights language of duty-bearers who have to act to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the poor. PUCL acknowledged central and state governments in India as the main duty holder with the duty to defend the right to food. The petitioner argued that these duty bearers must be held accountable for their failure to assist individuals and households facing acute hunger while large stocks of food remained in government storage houses. The petitioners further requested the Supreme Court to ask government action aimed at addressing the implementation challenges associated with the country's main social protection programmes. They also questioned whether helpless groups in the population (e.g. poor women, children and the aged) were adequately enclosed and targeted by public policy. While the PIL was primarily brought against the government of Rajasthan, thanks to civil society activism and mobilisation, it now applies to all state governments in India.²¹

Conclusion

In sum up we can say that in its real sense, the court has played a vital role in imposing positive obligations as to reduce poverty & improve nutritional food security in India. But, still now no effective steps have been taken by the states to implement the constitutional obligation to care for nutritional food

security of the people. It has rightly been said that nutrition, food and health are the inputs accepted for the development of human resources. For achieving the Constitutional obligation and also objectives of the nutritious food for all, there is a need on the part of the government to organize nongovernmental organization and the general public so that they can do their best. It is also duty of the government of the concerned states to take effective steps to reduce poverty.

Suggestions

Flexible coverage

There must be Flexible covered and proportionate for entitlement of rural and urban population Based on the trend of urbanization over the period.

Identification of Priority Households

There should be an identification of eligible households so that target of zero exclusion error and formation of a task force for identification and coverage of destitute and downtrodden people.

Transparency and Effectiveness

There must be computerization of the PDS to impart in the functioning of entire PDS.

Decentralized Procurements

Procurements Decentralized so that the purchase mechanism of the food grains by leveraging the with the objective of lowering the procurement overhead and incidental expenses.

Storage Capacity

Promoting the initiatives the development of for efficient and economically viable storage solutions, using advanced technology. Methods like Augmentation of by developing silos, cold storage chain and indigenous methods of storage of food grains should be used.

Promotion of Agricultural Societies

Agricultural societies for farmers for production, procurement and storage of the food grains, which may lead to self-sufficiency.

Modernization

Modernization of the packaging, processing and distribution process of the food grains.

Food Coupons

Use of as a substitute for the ration cards using which the beneficiaries can purchase the required food grains from the open market at the subsidized prices, and this may reduce pressure on the PDS.

Direct Cash Transfer

Food security through direct cash transfer may be a cost effective option for the safety net program, which can benefit in exploring more options to the consumers, reduce the risk of distortions and boost investment in agricultural and non-agricultural activities due to improved access to the credit.

Education and Training

Education and training is an ongoing process and its role cannot be ignored for the success of the NFSA. For the successful

implementation of the NFSA, education and training in every facet of the act is necessary for all the stakeholders of food grain supply chain right from farmers to the beneficiaries.

Government Helpline

Setting up of government help lines for farmers and extension centres of agriculture universities/institutes in villages can be of great help in this regard. The operational inefficiencies with the procurement practices, storage and handling of food grains, and distribution can be mitigated by launching tailored educational programs with specific objectives and by giving training on use of information and communication technology to the concerned stakeholders.

Training Program

Mass base education and Training program for consumer awareness about the legal aspects of the act as well as issues related to the food security, diet, nutrition and health might lead to suffice the objectives of the NFSA.

Endnotes

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