

## THE QUESTION OF FOOD SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN BUNDELKHAND REGION OF UTTAR PRADESH

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### ABSTRACT

*A country can be said to have achieved complete food security if each and every person is able to consume 'an adequate and balanced diet' on a regular basis. But for India, even after the passage of more than six decades of independence, the greatest challenges still remains ensuring food and nutritional security to its citizens especially for those placed at the lowest rank of hierarchy. The situation is more acute in several states like Bihar, U.P., Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, etc. Focusing on the micro level of the issue, the Uttar Pradesh part of Bundelkhand region is notoriously known since couple of decades due to farmers' committing suicides under pressure from famine and drought. The region is agriculture based and most of the locals are engaged in agriculture activities for subsistence. But since one decade, Bundelkhand is struck by regular scarcity of water which has substantially retarded the development and growth of the region. Regular droughts, scanty rains, poor irrigation facilities, crop failure, burden of agricultural and private loans are proving curse for the locals and continuously sweeping the happiness of Bundelkhand region. Due to all these factors, locals of the region getting trapped in vicious circle of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition.*

*In this backdrop, the paper delves into various social, economic, ecological and environmental factors which are responsible for the problem of food insecurity in the region. The findings suggests that the land holding pattern of Bundelkhand region is highly caste based wherein the dominant castes have grabbed the bigger patches of agricultural land and thus excluded the marginalized caste people. The frequent environmental catastrophe in the form of famine and draught has lessened the ecological dependence and further reduced the poor to the level of hand to mouth existence. The policies and programs run by government to counter food insecurity and to ensure food security in terms of availability, access, and absorption in Bundelkhand Region is not effective enough to eradicate the problem. As a result, a large section of poor farmers have taken huge amount of loans on higher interest rates from local Mahajans Not able to repay the loan forces farmers to commit suicide under tremendous pressure.*

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of food security has undergone considerable change in recent years. Food availability<sup>1</sup> and absorption<sup>2</sup> are considered good measures of food security and the achievement of self-sufficiency is accorded high priority in the food policies of developing countries. Sustainable food security involves strengthening the livelihood security of all members within a household by ensuring social and economic access to balanced diet including the needed micronutrients, safe drinking water, basic health care and primary education (Razi, 2012). The problem of food security is more acute in several states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, etc. Focusing on the micro level of the issue, the Uttar Pradesh part of Bundelkhand region is notoriously known since couple of decades due to farmers' committing suicides under pressure from famine and drought. The region is agriculture based and most of the locals are engaged in agriculture activities for subsistence. But since last ten years, Bundelkhand is struck by the occurrence of regular scarcity of water which slowed down all the course of development and growth in the region.

Regular droughts, crop failure, scanty rains, poor irrigation facilities, burden of agricultural and private loans have been sweeping the happiness of Bundelkhand region. Coupled with this, the caste and landownership pattern adversely affected the livelihood of majority of rural population in the region. The rural agricultural credit structure<sup>3</sup> continuously entrapping farmers, especially the marginal and Dalit into public and private institutional debts, has a major role to play in this regard (Singh, 2012). Due to all these factors, villagers are getting trapped in vicious circle of poverty, food insecurity and health predicaments. These factors forced villagers to either migrate from region in search of livelihood or if not able to do so leads to committing suicide in some acute instances. The vicious circle of poverty forces them to put their minor children into work and adopt occupations hazardous in nature. Many government and non-government (NGO) agencies are working in the area by implementing various programmes like Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee act (MNREGA) etc. for providing food security and ensuring healthy life in the region but their programmes and works are not proved much beneficial or accessible to the aggrieved people.

In this background, the paper is divided into five parts. The first part discusses various theoretical approaches related to the area. The second part focuses on the geographical and demographical profile of Bundelkhand. Third

<sup>1</sup>Availability of food is a function of production and is to meet demands of growing population and changing dietary needs.

<sup>2</sup>Absorption of food is a function of access to clean drinking water, environmental hygiene and primary health care.

<sup>3</sup>Rural agricultural credit structure includes loans provided to local of the region by government, cooperative, regional rural banks, commercial banks, local moneylenders etc.

and fourth segment of the paper highlight food insecurity in Bundelkhand and challenging factors that are responsible for the problem of food insecurity in the region respectively. Analysis of the implemented policies has been done in the last section of the paper.

## FOOD SECURITY: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Food security is ensured when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle (World Food Summit, 1996). Sufficient calorie intake keeps human being and society happy. Without adequate food, individual especially children, women and old aged persons face the problems like malnutrition, sometimes hunger deaths etc. that is difficult to function. But enough food due to the natural disasters, caste hierarchy, present political culture, impoverished condition and illiteracy keep a large chunk of people away from government policies and programmes even after six decades of independence. As a matter of concern, many scholars tried to focus upon the problem of food security. There are some contributing theories related to food security. For instance, Malthus' Population Growth VS. Food Supply Theory, Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael's Food regime theory, Amartya Sen' the Entitlement Approach for Food Security.

In his '*An Essay on the Principle of Population as it affects the Future Improvement of Society*' (1798), **Malthus** argues that the food security and famines are caused by the lack of food supply. The growth of population creates more food demand; on the other hand, the food supply is limited. The land for agriculture has decreased due to the impact of rapid growth of population leading outrun of its ability to feed them. He further argues that if every couple raises four children, the population could easily double in twenty-five years, and from then on, it would keep doubling. It would rise not arithmetically—by factors of three, four, five, and so on—but geometrically—by factors of four, eight, and sixteen. According to him, regular growth of population fades the hope of keeping up of food supply. Clearing new land for farming or improving the yields of crops might produce a bigger harvest, but it can only increase arithmetically, not geometrically. Unchecked population growth inevitably brought famine and misery. Based on this point of view, he has suggested promoting female education and easy access to contraception to control the population by which food supply might be maintained.

**Food Regime Theory (1980)** is a broadly Marxist approach to theorizing food systems. It was developed in the late 1980s by **Harriet Friedmann** and **Philip McMichael**. Food regime analysis is concerned with explaining, and therefore politicizing, the strategic role of agriculture in the construction and development of the world capitalist economy. As a framework, it takes an historical view in order to identify stable periods of capital

accumulation associated with particular configurations of power and forms of agricultural production and consumption. With its Marxist influences, food regime theorists are also interested in how moments of crisis within a particular configuration are expressive of the dialectical tension that animates movement between such configurations (i.e. periods of transition). According to leading food regime proponent Philip McMichael, then, food regimes are always characterized by contradictory forces. Further, consolidation of a regime does not so much resolve as it does contain, or else strategically accommodate, these tensions; meanwhile, their intensification, often via the mobilizations of social movements, tends to signal a period of transition.

In his ‘**The Entitlement Approach for Food Security**’, **Amartya Sen** argues that famines are caused by the access of food. To solve the famines caused by the access of food, Sen promote the idea of entitlement approach. He divides two categories of the fundamental concept of entitlement; endowments and entitlements. Endowment refers to control of assets and resources including labor power. Entitlement refers to “the set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command in a society using the totality of right and opportunities that he or she faces”. Furthermore, Sen discusses that there are four of type entitlements or four legal ways of acquiring food. Firstly, the trade based entitlement, means the ability for people to sell or buy something for food. Secondly, the produced based entitlement refers to the ability to grow and produce food (or goods for buying food). Thirdly, own labour based entitlement, means the ability for selling the skill or labor power for purchasing or producing food. Fourthly, inheritance and transfer based entitlement, refers to access for food transfer that can be provide for the government or other person and society (Devereux, 2000).

Studies on different dimensions of food security, conducted by cross-section scholars reveal multitude factors behind food insecurity problem. In a nutshell it can be said that food security is viewed as a means of proper intake of calorie per day. Multifarious ideas are used to describe the responsible factors – population growth, unemployment, illiteracy, natural catastrophe, feudalism etc. for the problem of food insecurity. After six decades of independence it becomes imperative to know achievement of successive governments towards sufficient food facility for people irrespective of caste and gender inequalities as well as improper land holding pattern. It is very essential to evaluate and assess the impact of government policy and programme related to secure food, because, till now most of the people are facing problem of having adequate food and further several health related predicaments in their life.

## GEOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF BUNDELKHAND

Bundelkhand is known for its cultural-geographic region in India which is surrounded by Vindhyan Plateau in south, Yamuna River in north, Ken River in east and Betwa and Pahuj rivers in west. Bundelkhand region of central India is a semi-arid plateau that encompasses six districts of Madhya Pradesh (MP)<sup>4</sup> and seven districts of Uttar Pradesh (UP). The region comprises the seven districts of UP (Jhansi, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Lalitpur, Banda, Chitrakut and Mahoba) with total area of 29418 Sq. KM, which is 12.21% of the total geographical area of the Uttar Pradesh (Arya, 2010). In context of livelihood, agriculture and allied activities are the primary sources of the subsistence of local in the region. But since one decade, it has been in the headlines for the drought and dearth of livelihood circumstances and distress that has plagued it. From the reports of various institutions, it has been noted that there is mass migration, starvation deaths<sup>5</sup> and malnourishment cases and further increasing debts on farmers lead farmer's suicides over the years in the region.

Looking at Demography of Bundelkhand<sup>6</sup>, it has population of around 15.5 million out of which UP Bundelkhand districts consists population of around 8.2 million with higher population density in Plain areas (particularly in Jalaun, Banda and Hamirpur). According to the census 2001, 25.14% of the population belongs to Schedule Caste (SC) and 0.02% is Schedule Tribe (ST) in Bundelkhand region of U.P. There are 3243042 workers in the region out of which 68.58% are the main workers [67% male and 33% female] who have permanent work throughout the year and 31.42% are the marginal workers [33% males and 67% females] who have work on temporary basis. Cultivators and agriculture labour are 74.55% of the total workers in the region out of which more than 80% of the farmers are small and marginal (Arya, 2010).

## FOOD INSECURITY IN BUNDELKHAND<sup>7</sup>

Agriculture is the main source of livelihoods for rural communities in Bundelkhand region. In Western UP, over 75% of the total area is used for cultivation particularly in Hamirpur, Jalaun, Banda, Jhansi and Mahoba districts. The region however faces a number of natural constraints such as erratic rainfall, low soil fertility, soil erosion, limited irrigation facilities and degraded forests. Due to these constraints around 50% of land used for cultivation has drastically tumbled in Chitrakoot and Lalitpur districts that have adversely affected the agricultural production and livelihoods in the region. The food security does not look only at availability of food, which is the

<sup>4</sup> The Madhya Pradesh region consists of Sagar, Panna, Damoh, Chatarpur, Tikamgarh and Datia districts.

<sup>5</sup> For more details on the issue of starvation deaths and increasing problem of indebtedness see a report by Bharat Dogra (2008), "Hunger, Thrust and Indebtedness: Bundelkhand's Deepening Agro-Climatic Crisis," prepared for Hunger Monitoring Project, a study by Action-Aid India.

<sup>6</sup> For more details see the home site of Bundelkhand, [www.Bundelkhand.in](http://www.Bundelkhand.in).

<sup>7</sup> [www.Bundelkhand.in](http://www.Bundelkhand.in)

primary but also looks at access to food, which is determined by purchasing power, affected by caste and gender discrimination and can be severely affected by disasters like floods and drought. Another basic factor to consider food security is utilization of food - the body's ability to absorb food, or the health status of an individual, which is determined at the very basic level by access to safe drinking water, health services, and sanitation facilities. Thus, food insecurity is a complex issue and uses the indicators, like per capita consumption of food grain, percentage of population consuming less than prescribed calorie per day, proportion of drought-prone area, poverty line, and percentage of population reliant on labour. Based on these indicators, Uttar Pradesh part of Bundelkhand region is deemed 'severely insecure'. Because of continued and frequent spells of drought food security of a vast population in Bundelkhand region is always at stake.

### **RESPONSIBLE FACTORS FOR FOOD INSECURITY IN THE REGION**

The various challenging factors (socio-economic, ecological and environmental) which are responsible for the problem of food insecurity in the region are as following:

#### **Socio-Economic Factors**

**Poverty and Hunger:** The once prosperous Bundelkhand is now identified as one of India's most backward and poor regions. There is an extremely high prevalence of hunger and malnutrition in the region because of occurring regular droughts, crop failure, scanty rains and poor irrigation facilities. Deprivation of food and other necessities of living have consistently been among the causal backgrounds of the brutishness and brevity of human life. Due to all these influences the majority of rural population get trapped into the problem of poverty and turn to have huge amount of loan on higher interest rates from local know moneylenders called as 'arhatiyas'. By the time money lenders commence finance recovery course, farmers' encounters pressure of downing their assets and their social and self-esteem. In this course, when they fail to cope up, they either migrate from region in search of livelihood or if not able to do so lead to commit suicides in some acute instances.

The villages (in Kabrai block of Mahoba district and Madawara block of Lalitpur district in Bundelkhand) are in the grip of serious drought and adverse weather for the fifth continuous year. People here subsist mostly on roti and salt. In most families food is cooked only once a day, and sometimes even that is not possible. It is found by Bundelkhand Sewa Sansthan (an NGO) that poor families including Sahariyas tribes of Madawara block of Lalitpur district are eating chappatis made only from grass seeds and some of them are eating chappatis made from the mixture of the flour of wheat of Antyodaya food grains with the powder of grass seeds in equal

proportion<sup>8</sup>. Pulses and vegetables have become a luxury that the overwhelming majority of families just can't afford. Almost all the families in the villages are indebted, to banks or private moneylenders, the debts ranging from a few thousand rupees to over the lakhs. Many farmers can lose their land due to indebtedness if relief is not provided (Arya, 2010).

**Caste System and Land Holding Pattern:** The caste system, with its societal stratification and social restrictions continues major impact on food insecurity. Thakur, Lodhi and Yadav are the dominant castes in the region having high influences in social, political and economic context. They are the land holders and moneylenders however working castes known as backward class (BC) and scheduled castes (SC) are poor and considered at bottom in the Verna system<sup>9</sup> and are kept away from opportunities to require food and nutrition. That is why the households belonging to these castes are more food insecure than that of upper castes. In spite of high percentage of SC population in the region, they have own land less than 1 acre (30.5%) and large percentage of them (25.8%) are land less compare to general community. This shows that land holding pattern is highly caste based in the region. Wherein dominant castes have grabbed the bigger patches of agricultural land and thus excluded the marginalized caste people. Thus such meager land holdings by a large majority of marginal farmers are neither viable nor sustainable for the region with million plus mouths to feed.

### Ecological and Environmental Factors

**Climate Change:** Threat of climate change looms over Indian agriculture. *In Bundelkhand, it is difficult to predict the weather. People of the area have to use a planned approach towards agriculture and livestock management based on a systematic analysis of climatic system because weather gets stormy in summer. In fact in monsoon, locals of the region don't get rains, it is missing and in the end of winter it is so cold that all their vegetables, wheat and other crops fail.* This change causes floods and widespread harms in livestock. Due to changing weather most of the families in the regions either losses their cattle to drought or set it free to find its own means of survival and the villagers themselves struggle to live each day. In this uncertain behavior of the climatic system, bounty rainfall does not make much positive impact on the agriculture, livestock and other livelihood systems in Bundelkhand.

<sup>8</sup>Antyodaya ration cards were issued to these people, which enabled families living below the poverty line to buy 20 kg of wheat and 10 kg of rice a month at Rs. 3 and Rs. 2 per kg respectively. This had only limited impact due to lack of purchasing power.

<sup>9</sup> In Verna system was source of present caste hierarchy in India which divided population into four classes, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishays, and, Shudras. It was based on the occupation of the people and the complexion of the skin. In this hierarchical order Brahmins were on the top ranking followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishays, and, Shudras. In due to course of time, it become extremely rigid and high caste people exploit to low caste people.

The land and people of Bundelkhand are facing the crisis of drought continuously since couple of decades and it has shattered the villagers' hope of earning in the past few years because they have not any choice except waiting for rain in required time but monsoon come with water against their hope and the farmers stands with empty handed just watching the lands because they are not having enough resources to fetch seeds for farming because the rain fall is not enough to meet out the prevailing evils of hunger, water crisis, food security and livelihood crisis.

**Water Scarcity:** Bundelkhand is facing huge scarcity of water despite the presence of rivers like Betwa, Shahzad, Ken, Dhasan, Mandakini, Yamuna, Jamni and Sajnam. The water level of the hand pumps has been going down continuously. Nonar drinking water scheme and BalapurKhalsa drinking water scheme are running in prone areas of the region to reduce the scarcity of water. Except it several hand pumps have been maintained under the Adarsh drinking water scheme but all are useless and the plight of villagers becoming miserable increasingly. With scant rains and little help from the government, most people in the region faced a bleak future. But people of backward districts Jalaun, Hamirpur and Lalitpur in the region have started work to secure their water resources.

Women from 60 gram panchayats of the three districts got together to form Paani Panchayats (water councils) in their villages, which have become a model for local self-governance to address water and employment problems in rural areas. The focus of these Paani Panchayats is to create more water resources, revive old ones and conserve natural water with the help of traditional and modern technology. The Paani Panchayats<sup>10</sup> offer a way out for women who have to fetch water from a distance. Scarcity of drinking water has been steadily increasing in the region due to scanty rainfall.

**Deforestation:** Historically, almost entire region of Bundelkhand was covered by dense forests and were the main source of subsistence of the locals. Mahua flowers, fruits and seeds, tendu leaves and firewood are a major source of livelihood for people living in hilly areas of Bundelkhand, like the Kols in Patha area of Chitrakoot, tribal groups living in and around forests of Panna district and Sahariyas of Lalitpur district<sup>11</sup>. But forests are being cut down very fast by the mafias particularly affecting Banda, Mahoba, Chitakoot, Lalitpur and Hamirpur districts of Bundelkhand. The problem of soil erosion, soil filling into the ponds making them useless, direct flow

<sup>10</sup> It is a Self Help Group mostly of the Dalit women from 60 gram Panchyats of three backward districts- Jalaun, Hamirpur and Lalitpur of Bundelkhand region who have joined their hands to make their village draught proof. For more details see the link [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in).

<sup>11</sup> [www.bundelkhand.in](http://www.bundelkhand.in).

of rainwater into the rivers, depleting ground water resources and unproductively of the land, all these are the emerging issues in Bundelkhand which have roots into the depletion of forest.

A fact finding report by the Kashipur Solidarity Group (an association of activists, scientists and environmentalists) has pointed out mining at the core of all environmental degradation and deforestation on hills in the region with citing the example of Mahoba district, known for its rampant stone mining. Thousands of trucks are loaded with stones leave this area every day for Kanpur, Lucknow and elsewhere. Kabrai block of Mahoba is the epicenter of these stone mining activities (Khurana, 2008). Therefore, all these activities has dotted the area with densely forested hills and left with just barren as well as has lessened the ecological dependence of the local and further reduced the poor to the level of hand to mouth existence.

### **EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES IN THE STUDY REGION**

**Mid-Day Meal (MDM):** The midday meal scheme was launched as a two-pronged strategy to lower the widespread incidence of malnutrition primarily among children of poor families and to increase their access to education. At any point of time, around 200 million children, between the ages of 5-14 years are victims of malnutrition, associated with food shortages, population expansion, lack of suitable food substitutes, poverty, ignorance, traditional beliefs and customs. The scheme was aimed at boosting primary school attendance, by allowing children of parents living below subsistence levels to attain basic literacy levels rather than being pushed into the workforce at an early age. But the ambitious central government scheme of mid-day meal seems to have fallen flat on the barren lands of Bundelkhand.

A number of problems have been observed in many primary schools of Lalitpur and Banda Districts of Bundelkhand in implementation of mid-day meal scheme. Firstly, most of the schools possess a kitchen built with poor quality ingredients which could not even bear a storm or a minor earthquake. Secondly, it has been observed that fixed quantity of food grains (based on count of students and their age) supplied by the government is inadequate. In such cases government either shortens the amount of supplied grain or suggests headmaster to stop the service for a period. Thirdly, the quality of food provided to children is generally of very poor standard. Far from being a balanced diet, midday meal comprises of poor quality eatables, often inadequate and tasteless. Fourthly, a few teachers were found feeding wrong and inflated figures about students availing the facility, however there is no regular mechanism to avoid any such malpractice, except the sudden visits of 'inspection teams'. Fifthly, in few villages even problems of caste differences occurred, while children of upper castes denied eating with children of lower castes or the food cooked by women of lower castes. Over questions of reason for

this denial, nearly all spilled out the venom embedded in their minds and hearts by their parents about how their caste will be destroyed by any such activity. Finally, it has been observed that children of very poor families have started to come only for the sake of free food and scholarships. In schools where maintenance of discipline is a problem, students even jump out of school and go back home after the mid-day meal (Dwivedi, 2012).

**Public Distribution System (PDS):** It has been considered as an important food based safety net. The basic objective of the PDS is to provide essential consumer goods at the cheap and highly subsidized prices to the people below the poverty line so as to insulate them from the impact of rising prices of these commodities and maintain the minimum nutritional status of the population. But the government has failed to provide basic entitlements to people under the PDS. In the last few years the rations available through the PDS have assumed great significance for families living below the poverty line due to insecurity of livelihood, various deprivations and skyrocketing prices of basic items. In this crucial period the state government has not only reduced the quantity of grain available under the PDS but has also failed to take any solid steps to improve the system and to ensure that the exact quantities of rations reach the right people. Some ration-card holders of Mahokhar Panchayat in Banda district, contends that roti made out of red flour from red wheat becomes rock hard on getting cold and tastes like fodder (Singh, 2012). The quality of wheat has degraded to such an extent that even animals refuse to eat it. But poor families are forced to eat it under abject poverty and food insecurity. This is because in ration shops of Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh extremely poor quality wheat, which is harmful to health, is being imported and distributed to families living below poverty level.

**Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY):** In order to make more focused and targeted towards the poorest section of population, the “Antyodaya Anna Yojna” was launched to ensure food security for all by creating a hunger free India and to reform and improve the Public Distribution System so as to serve the poorest of the poor in rural and urban areas. AAY contemplates identification of one crore families out of the number of BPL families covered under PDS within states to provide 35 Kg food grains per family per month at the rate of Rs.2/- per Kg for wheat and Rs. 3/- per Kg for rice(Hazra, 2012). Even with success of AAY, some people are far from the benefits of this scheme and are not in a position to buy food grains round the year even at BPL rates because of low purchasing power. It has been found in villages of Atarra tehsil in Banda district of Bundelkhand that at least four eligible persons (including adivasis and those dalits who fall in the aged, infirm and widow’s category) have not been issued AAY cards and some AAY families are getting even less than one third of the total entitlement of grain.

**Rural Works Programme/Drought Prone Area Programme:** The main objective of the Rural Works Programme (RWP) was to blunt the severity of scarcity conditions. Emphasis was, therefore, laid on labour intensive schemes to provide employment opportunities to the local labour. This programme was regarded as a permanent solution to the problems of drought in the selected districts. The plans of this scheme were treated as an exercise in micro-level planning for integrated area development of the drought prone areas. Keeping in view the changed scope of the programme, the Rural Works Programme (RWP) was renamed as Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP). The Drought Prone Area Programme during the Fifth Five Year Plan was initiated with two main objectives: (I) long-term development of the area with a view to restoring ecological balance; and (II) short-term programme of development which will help in improving the lot of the community in general and the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers in the particular area. The main strategy of the programme was development and management of irrigation resources; social conservation of moisture and afforestation; restructuring of cropping pattern and pasture development changes in agronomic practices: livestock development; and development of small/marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. The strategy adopted in the Sixth Five Year Plan for DPAP continued during the Seventh Plan which would include increased stress on activities which can contribute directly to the restoration of the ecological balance and increasing the per capita income through effective development of land and other natural resources including efficient utilization of scarce water, conservation of scanty rainfall and arresting it sun-off from draught prone areas. Accordingly the programme, as at present, would continue to be implemented as an integrated area development programme rather than as a programme merely for creating increased employment opportunities.

**Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA):** The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. But these are paltry measures. MGNREGA is seen in many parts of rural India as an easy way of making money and the loot in the state of UP alone would run into several hundred crores. The modalities of fraud detected by the NGO Vidya Dham Samiti (VDS) in one village, Kolawal Raipur, in Mahua block of Banda district of UP Bundelkhand, reveal how the national rural employment scheme can be systematically subverted for private gain. VDS approached some villagers of Kolawal Raipur, who had been complaining to district and block officials about the blatant misuse of MGNREGA in their village by the pradhan (elected panchayat head) and local functionaries. In Kolawal Raipur, VDS found that there were at least 14 job cards issued in the names of people who plainly did not need to do labour work, or were ineligible. The ineligible job card-holders included the pradhan's three adult and unmarried sons who lived with him and showed

that only one job card issued for the entire household. Job cards had also been issued to some of the pradhan's married relatives, with separate job cards for the husbands and the wives (Gopal, 2011).

**Implementation of National Food Security Bill:** In recent years, the government of India has taken several initiatives towards ensuring rights and entitlements of citizens of the country. Right to information, right to employment and right to food are the key initiatives. To provide legal entitlement of access to food to the people of county, the National Advisory Council (NAC) prepared a draft of National Food Security Bill that has passed with rejecting more than 300 amendments in Lok Sabha on 26 August 2013 and in Rajya Sabha on 2 September 2013. NFSB aims to provide subsidized food grain to around 67% (75% rural and 50% urban) of India's 1.2 billion people. The households are classified into two categories- priority households (46% rural and 28% urban households) and general households (39% rural and 12% urban households in first phase and 44% rural and 22% urban households in final phase). As per the provisions of the bill, beneficiaries of the priority households would be entitled to have a 35 Kg food grains per month at ₹ 3/kg for rice, ₹ 2/kg for wheat and ₹ 1/kg for millets. The general households would be entitled to have a 20 Kg food grains per month at the same rate. The Bill also proposes that every pregnant woman and lactating mother would get free meal during pregnancy till six months after child birth and will also get a maternity benefit of ₹ 6,000 in installments. Children up to 14 years would get free meals. In case of non-supply of food grains, states will have to pay food security allowance to beneficiaries.

## CONCLUSION

With the above discussion it can be concluded that the problem of hunger and malnutrition in the region is clearly linked to the inequalities and treats to food security. The caste system, landownership and natural mishaps in the region adversely affect the livelihood of majority of rural populace, neglect of traditional water management systems and thrust towards cultivation of water exhaustive commercial crops further has deteriorated the situation in Bundelkhand. The locals of the area are accentuated by the lack of proper infrastructure and services, most of the benefits of these are being appropriated by richer farmers and by degradation of natural resources. Therefore, at the last, keeping in view the current food stock and the rate of food production it can be suggested that sustaining the current rate of food production if the government puts minute attention towards proper storage as and distribution of available food grain at the same time if it can ensure proper implementation of the existing food security initiatives maintaining good governance in every sphere of services delivery system- then the government might not have to go for an exorbitant initiative like “ The Right to Food Act” and ”National food Security Bill” for existing food for all.

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