

PRIS AND PDS IN FOOD SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN DARBHANGA DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Improving the food security is an issue of considerable importance for the developing state like Bihar where one half of people suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Food availability and stability were considered as good measure of food security till the seventies and achievement of self sufficiency was accorded high priority in the food policies of India. There has been a significant change in the food grain scenario from a scarcity to surplus situation because of the acceleration in the production of food grains in the 1980s. Though India was successful in achieving self sufficiency by increasing food production and also improved its capacity to cope with year to year fluctuations in food production it could solve the problem of chronic household food insecurity. At the end of twentieth century and introducing the Second Green Revolution with a broad spectrum of programmes for improving food security India has solved the problem of food security by mounting buffer stock, but there are millions of food insecure and undernourished people in many Indian states like Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. This Paper is a modest attempt to study the PRIS and PDS in Food Security Management in Darbhanga District.

Key Words: Food insucurity, Food Security Management, PDS, PRIS.

INTRODUCTION

The main cause of food insecurity in such states is not food supply put its distribution. Despite a significant

reduction in the incidence of poverty, chronic food insecurity persists in a major parts of country's population. The Indian Government is more serious on this issue and therefore, the National Development Council of India in its 53rd meeting held on 29th May, 2007 adopted a resolution to launch a 'Food Security Mission' comprising rice, wheat and pulses to increase the production of rice by 10 million tonnes, wheat by 8 million tonnes and pulses by 2 million tonnes by the end of the Eleventh Plan (2007-12).

Agriculture and its allied sectors assume great importance in Bihar's economy. This is because nearly 90 percent of its population residing in rural areas earns its livelihood from these sectors. Bihar has 38 District Panchayats, 531 Intermediate Panchayats and 8463 Gram Panchayats. The performance levels of the PRIs have been directly proportionate to levels of transfer of 3 Fs viz. Functions, Functionaries and Funds (Kunncemkal, 2011). The Gram Sabha had been visualized as an institutionalized forum of villages that would ensure that every voice in the village was heard, the needs and concerns of every quarter of the society was addressed and that the elected representatives of the Panchayats performed their duties as expected of them.

POVERTY IN BIHAR

Poverty is a key issue in all the developing economics of the world. Apart from the hardship that it causes to the poor people, it also entails social and political instability. For measuring poverty, the Planning Commission has adopted the Tendulkar Committee estimates which, apart from the caloric consumption has also included expenditure on health and education.

Table-1 presents the poverty ratio in Bihar and India, for the years 2004-05 and 2011-12, as estimated by the Tendulkar Committee. The poverty ratio of Bihar is higher in both 2004-06 and 2011-12, compared to all-India level. The ratio for Bihar is 34.1 percent for rural and 31.2 percent for urban households in 2011-12, implying an overall poverty ratio of 33.7 percent. These poverty ratio are much higher than that for India. From the table, it is also seen that, between 2004-05 and 2011-12, the poverty ratio declined by 207 percentage points for Bihar as against, 15.3 percentage points for al-India. The pace of reduction of rural poverty has been faster than that of the urban poverty, in both Bihar and India.

Table-1
Poverty Ratio of Bihar and India

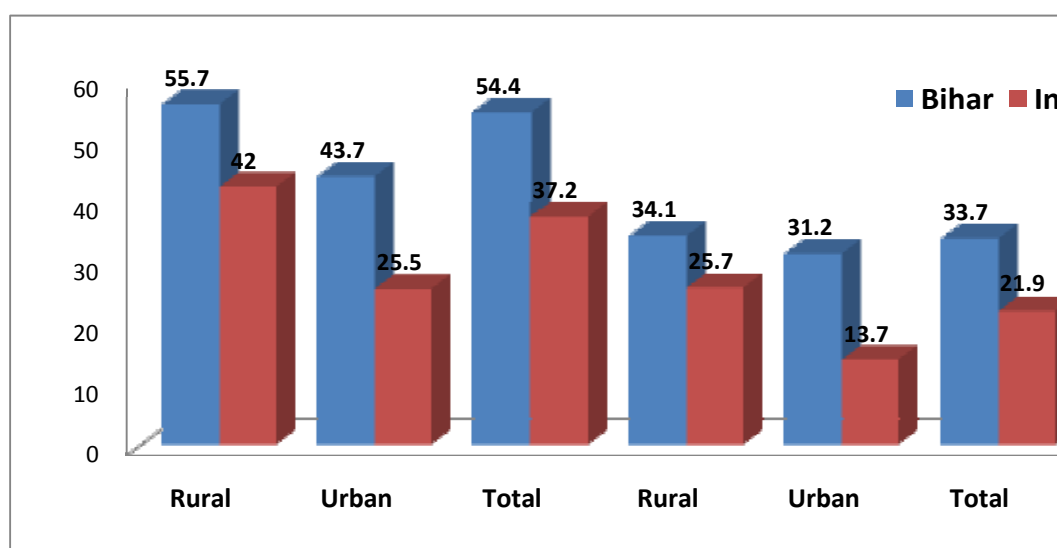
State	2004-05			20011-12			Reduction in Poverty Ratio (in% Point)		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Bihar	55.7	43.7	54.4	34.1	31.2	33.7	21.6	12.5	20.7
India	42.0	25.5	37.2	25.7	13.7	21.9	16.3	11.8	15.3

Note: Poverty Ratio per Tendulkar Committee Methodology

Source: Economic Survey 2013-14, Government of Bihar, p. 216

Chart-1

Poverty Ratio of Bihar and India (2004-05 and 2011-12)



Source: Economic Survey 2013-14, Government of Bihar, p. 217

The result of the 66th round of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) reveals that, in 2011-12, the average monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) in rural areas in India is Rs. 1287.2 and, for urban areas, it is Rs. 2477.2 (Table 4.2). The same figure for Bihar is Rs. 970.4 for rural and Rs. 1396.7 for urban areas. In fact, the figure of Bihar is the lowest among all the major states.

Table-2
Average Monthly Per Capita Expenditure of Bihar and India in 2011-12 (in Rs.)

	Rural	Urban
Bihar	970.4	1396.7
All-India	1287.2	2477.2

Source: NSSO6th round Cited in Economic Survey 2013-14, Government of Bihar, p. 218

All these indicators emphasize that the programmes of the state government to alleviate poverty need to be implemented more effectively, more so in rural area. In the following section, an attempt is made to review the implementation of some poverty alleviation programmes in Bihar, which are expected to generate additional income and expand livelihood options for its people.

PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN BIHAR

The three-tier Panchayat Raj Institutions in Bihar consist of a Gram Panchayat at the lowest level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level and Zila Parishad at the district level. The Chairpersons of the Gram Panchayat, the Panchayat Samiti and the Zila Parishad are called Mukhiya, Pramukh and Adhyaksha respectively. According to 73rd constitutional amendment, Bihar Panchayat Raj Act, 2006 was enacted to strengthen the three-tier panchayat system in the state. Presently, in 38 districts of Bihar, there are 531 Panchayat Samities, and 8398 Gram Panchayats. There is a provision of 50 percent reservation for women, including the reservation on single posts (Table 4.3).

Table-3
Overview of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Bihar

Details	No.	Details	No.
Zila Parishad	38	Gram Kachhari Members	115876
Panchayat Samiti	531	Gram Panchayat Sarpanch	8398
Gram Panchayat	8398	Gram Panchayat Secretary	8463
Gram Kachhari	8398	Nyaya Mitra	8398
Gram Panchayat Members	115876	Gram Kachhari Secretary	8398
Gram Panchayat Mukhia	8398	Zilla Panchayat Raj Offices	38

Panchayat Samiti Members	11566	Panchayat Raj Office	528
Zilla Parishad Members	1162		

Source: Website of Department of Panchayat Raj, Government of Bihar

The state Government has taken numerous steps to fortify the PRIs:

- With the objective of making the three-tier PRIs inclusive, responsive and accountable, the Bihar Panchayat Strengthening Project is being implemented in 1304 Gram Panchayats of 91 Blocks in 6 districts of the state (Patna, Nalanda, Bhojpur, Saharsa, Supaul and Madhepura). The total project cost is 120 million US Dollars (Rs. 667.44) crore at the exchange rate of Rs. 55.62 per US Dollar). An agreement in this context has been signed with the World Bank.
- A sum of Rs. 1237.17 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of 1435 Panchayat Sarkar Bhawans. At present, 475 Bhawans have already been completed, and 211 Bhawans are in the last state of completion. The rest is under process at different levels of execution.
- The honorarium of Gram Katchahary Nyayamitra has been enhanced from Rs. 2500 to Rs. 7000 per month. For Gram Katchahary Sachiv, it has been enhanced from Rs. 2000 to Rs. 6000 per month.
- The Training Modules have been prepared for elected representatives and functionaries of the Gram Panchayats. They mainly consist of subjects related to the functioning of Gram Sabha, Women Empowerment, Development Scheme, Financial Management, and Maintenance of Records and Cash Books.
- To promote transparency and accountability in the functioning of PRIs, E- Panchayat Mission Mode Project is being implemented to enable the Gram Panchayats under National E-governance programme.
- The representatives of the Panchayats were declared public servants under the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act, 2006.
- A total amount of Rs. 4972.93 crore for the period 2010-11 to 2014-15 was released to the PRIs in light of the recommendation of the Thirteenth Finance Commission. This sum is utilised for the construction of Aanganwadi Centres, Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) Roads, approach roads linking settlements with a population of less than 250 to the main road, and renovation/maintenance of government building in block levels. On the recommendation of the Fourteenth Finance Commission, a grant of Rs. 21017.83 crore has been sanctioned to the

PRIIs.

- A total amount of Rs. 2118.60 crore was provided to the PRIIs for the period 2011-12 to 2014-15 under the Fourth State Finance Commission. A fund of Rs. 15.00 lakh, Rs. 1.00lakh and Rs. 2.00 lakh was provided as United grant to each Zila Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat respectively.

PDS IN BIHAR

It is now well recognised that, to ensure food security, not only adequate foodgrains should be available, but the poor should have sufficient means to purchase food. The capacity of the poor to purchase food can be ensured in two ways- either by raising their incomes or through supplying foodgrains at subsidised prices. While the employment generation programmes attempt the first solution, the PDS is the mechanism for the second option. The PDS is a target group strategy to alleviate poverty, and it is extremely important for Bihar where incidence of poverty is very high. Four essential commodities distributed through PDS outlets are-wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene oil.

The social background of PDS dealers is presented in Table-5. The total number of PDS dealers is 42,141. The share of backward and extremely backward castes among the dealers is about 37.0 percent, that of scheduled castes 16.4 percent, and general castes 19.4 percent. The distribution of PDS dealers by their social background in different districts is presented in Table 4.6. The ownership pattern of PDS outlets at the district level is nearly the same as in the state level.

Table-5
Social Background of PDS Dealers

Social Background of PDS Dealers	No of PDS Outlets		Percentage Share	
	2014	2015	2014	2015
Scheduled Caste	6857	6891	16.3	16.4
Scheduled tribes	323	327	0.8	0.8
Backward Caste	12445	12463	29.9	29.6
Extremely Backward Caste	3068	3109	6.8	7.4
Minority	3036	2812	7.1	6.7

Women	3387	3361	7.7	8.0
Women Self Help Groups	202	209	0.5	0.5
Other Self Help Groups	118	105	0.4	0.2
Co-operative Society (Ex-Army Personnel	4579	4494	10.7	10.7
Handicapped	177	180	0.3	0.4
General	8259	8190	19.4	19.4
Total	42451	42141	100.0	100.0

Source: Website of Department of Food and Consumer Protection, Government of

Bihar

Till 2012-13, PDS were implemented under three schemes, namely (i) BPL, (ii) Antyodaya and (iii) Annapurna. After the Enactment of National Food Security Act, February 2014, the PDS is run under two schemes - (1) Antyodaya- providing 35 kgs of foodgrains per month to extremely poor BPL families (21 kgs of rice and 14 kgs of wheat) and (2) Privileged Household (PHH) scheme in which eligible members of a family are provided 5 kgs of foodgrains each month (3 kgs of rice and 2 kgs of wheat). These foodgrains are provided at a subsidised rate Rs. 3 per kgs. for rice and Rs. 2 per kg for wheat. As per Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) survey list, 7.60 crore persons are being presently provided with the subsidised food grains in Bihar.

The operational details of PDS in Bihar for the last five years 2010- 11 to 2014-15 are presented in Table-5. it shows that the lifting of both wheat and rice under Antyodaya scheme has been close to 100 percent during the last five years. Under PHH scheme, the lifting percentage was less than 100 percent for both wheat and rice up to 2012-13. But, during the last two years, it has been close to 100 percent. For wheat, liftings were 94.8 percent (2013-14) and 95.0 percent (2014-15). For rice, the liftings were 96.4 percent (2013-14) and 97.0 percent (2014-15).

INTERVENTION IN THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

- From July, 2015 onwards, the distribution of foodgrains (both Antyodaya and (PHH) and kerosene is done through coupon.
- There is now a provision for vehicles loaded with foodgrains being fitted with GPS for monitoring their movements. Currently 72.4 percent vehicles are fitted with GPS.

- The action for end-to-end computerization is being taken for institutions like Bihar State Food Corporation (BSFC) and operation of PDS in order to strengthen the system. Under PDS computerization scheme, all supply offices of respective districts, subdivisions and blocks have been supplied with computers. One (PMU (Project Management Unit) is being set up at the headquarters of the Department.

PDS IN DARBHANGA DISTRICT

Darbhanga is one of the most industrially backward district in Bihar. Only 2.4 percent people of this area is engaged in industrial activity. Economy of the district is agriculture based. The soil of the district is highly calcareous and a mixture of clay and sand which makes it suitable for rice and rabbi crops. The total area of the district is 241443.20 hectares, out of which 198415 hectares is cultivable, 19617 hectares is upland, 37660 hectares is medium and 38017 hectare is low land. There is 29706 hectare of chaur areas. 82.17 percent of the total area is cultivable. The farmers mainly depend on monsoon. The majority of residents of the district depend on agriculture and allied activities.

Darbhanga district has only one town i.e. the headquarters Darbhanga itself with 9 percent people as urban. The population figure touches many development aspects. The heavy and increasing magnitude of population is most fundamental to the economic growth. The present economic condition of this area is not healthy and wealthy to feed the entire people and to provide employment to its working force. Naturally migratory behaviour of the people is not uncommon. There are altogether 1321 villages in the district where agriculture is primary activity. The whole society is running in the turmoil with the economic and social status, so called upper, backward and scheduled castes. A small group of upper and backward castes possess the ownership of land and remaining majority of the people are landless.

CONCLUSION

In view of the analysis made so far, we are in a position to answer some of the important basic questions associated with the objectives, philosophy and working of PDS in the state of Bihar. There is little doubt that the PDS is an availability and price intervention system rather than the one which increases or maintains the availability of income earning opportunities for the individuals. This system can, therefore, overcome some weaknesses notwithstanding, protects the consumers against high and sometimes exploitative open market prices. After all, the PDS makes available, at predetermined, relatively stable prices, specified amounts of specified commodities to its intended beneficiaries.

Thus, the primary objectives of the PDS to ensure minimum consumption level of the relatively poorer population with sticky low incomes and irregular and unstable employment is met to some extent in the state of Bihar in general and Darbhanga district in particular.

To project the interest of the consumers in Bihar, the Government of Bihar is stringing hard to meet the cherished objectives of PDS in letter and spirit and for this purpose various steps have been initiated. In the state, Consumer Protection Rules, 1988 were notified. A state commission at Patna and a District Redressal Forums in each district of the state have been established. Wide publicity about the functioning of the State Commission and District Redressal Forums has been given to promote awareness amongst consumers. Consumer complaints are being received and processed both by the State Commissions and District Consumer Redressal Forums. It is hoped that Bihar, in due course of time would emerge as a pioneer state in the matter of running its PDS on efficient lines so that its cherished objectives are fulfilled. The Panchayati Raj Institutions have to play pivot role in attaining this objective.

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