

Crisis of Food Security and State's Response and Policy Initiative: Politics of Hunger and Food Policy in India

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ABSTRACT

Food policy should serve humanity by advancing the humane goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Food insecurity has been the major concern of food policy in India. The hunger and food insecurity is the most atrocious form of deprivation in the way of fulfilment of most basic need of every human being. Every individual has a fundamental right to be free from hunger and have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food and its effective utilization for an active and healthy life. There should be no place for hunger and food insecurity in a democratic society. Several policies were initiated by the government from time to time to increase food security. Public Distribution System is one of the major state policies to eradicate food insecurity. The Public Distribution System (PDS) is a large-scale food rationing programme, meant to increase food security at both the national and the household levels.

INTRODUCTION

The new Food and Nutrition Security Policy (FNSP) provides an overarching framework covering the multiple dimensions of food security and nutrition improvement. It has been purposefully developed to add value and create synergy to existing sectoral and other initiatives of government and partners. It recognizes the need for multi-public and private sector involvement, and that hunger eradication and nutrition improvement is a shared responsibility of all India. The policy and associated actions will remain dynamic to address contextual changes and changing conditions over time. This policy is framed in the context of basic human rights, child rights and women's rights, including the universal 'Right to Food'.

Policy issue

1- It is the policy of the government that all India, throughout their life-cycle enjoy at all times safe food in sufficient quantity and quality to satisfy their nutritional needs for optimal health.

The broad objectives of the FNSP are:

- To achieve good nutrition for optimum health of all India.
- To increase the quantity and quality of food available, accessible and affordable to all Indians at all times.
- To protect vulnerable populations using innovative and cost-effective safety nets linked to long-term development.

2- The FNSP addresses associated issues of chronic, poverty-based food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as the perpetuity of acute food insecurity and malnutrition associated with frequent and recurring emergencies, and the critical linkages thereof. These issues are:

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

This internationally accepted definition of food security, established at the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome, includes the following four components:

- ☐ **Availability** of sufficient food of appropriate quality.
- ☐ **Stability** of food supply.
- ☐ **Accessibility** or affordability of food.
- ☐ **Utilization** of safe food through adequate diet, clean water, sanitation and health care.¹

India's food policy is in a state of flux. This is a rare moment. Food policies and their governance have enjoyed stability and continuity for many decades. Indeed, the framework for these policies was set by the war-time interventions of the colonial government in India. Those interventions consisting of direct procurement of grain and rationed distribution were made with the objective of securing food supplies for urban populations. Even though the objectives of food policy have mutated over the years, the interventions have not materially changed from except for changes in regards to scale. The Public Distribution System (PDS) owes its origins to the rationing systems of World War II. The Food Corporation of India (FCI), the principal central government apparatus responsible for food grain procurement and storage, was set up in the mid-1960s. The practice of offering support prices to rice and wheat also dates from that period.

The series of reforms since 1991 that saw greater integration of India with world markets along with greater freedom for entrepreneurial activity left the food and agricultural sector largely untouched.² The important dimension to understand hunger and food insecurity is from the standpoint of politics. The very base to solve any social problem is political will and action. Since 1991, as part of the structural adjustment policies, there has been an increasing tendency to reduce food subsidies. The word 'subsidy' is no longer a respectable word in the era of globalization. Modern day protagonists of liberalization often tend to regard the concept of 'subsidy' and 'burden' as being synonymous. A critical examination of the food policy is crucial in

¹ World Food Summit in Rome, 1996

² For accounts of India's early food policy, see Bhatia (1970) and Chopra (1981)

the era of liberalization. India faced serious problems on its food front right from the independence and food deficits persisted up to mid-1970s. The government of India has attempted to move towards the goal of food security. The state intervention in this direction has been two-pronged, adopting an economic growth approach and simultaneously a welfare approach. Government has made significant attempts at food security through the food based social security interventions. In this direction Public Distribution System is one of the major policy initiatives. Public distribution of food at affordable prices through the Fair Price Shops has been the key element of food security system in India. Public Distribution System in India is indeed the largest of its kind in the world. The Public Distribution System (PDS) has evolved over a long period in India. Policies are made and remade, not in a kind of evolutionary or natural process but in historical process and as a result of political and economic consequences.

GOVERNMENTAL SCHEMES FOR FOOD SECURITY

2.1 The rationale of governmental schemes

2.2 ICDS

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2.1 The rationale of the governmental schemes

The Government of India has started a variety of programmes to address the problem of hunger in the society, with the aim of guaranteeing a basic nutrition to the whole population and therefore break the vicious circle of hunger and poverty. The rationale behind these schemes is to provide a continued assistance throughout all stages of life, beginning even before birth.

When a woman gets pregnant, she receives food through the **Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS)**, which uses the system of the Anganwadi Centers to ensure adequate nutrition both to her, since her need to rest and stay out of work, and to the child she carries during the development phases of the foetus.

When the mother is approaching delivery, if she is recognized to be Below the Poverty Line (BPL), another programme activates: the **National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS)**, which had, at least in the beginning, the objective to guarantee enough nutrition to the women in the 8-12 weeks preceding the birth of their children. Though, in the last years the element of food security was progressively dropped, and the focus was set on ensuring a safe, institutional delivery, preventing this way all the problems tied to non-hospitalized births.

Once the child is born, he also falls under the **ICDS** scheme: the aim is to guarantee adequate nutrition of the child, first indirectly during the lactating phase by providing food to the mother, and later directly, until he reaches schooling age (6 years). Also other finalities are pursued, like early immunization of the children and pre-school instruction.

Once a child grows up and reaches age 6, he is covered under the **Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS)**, which has basically two objectives: to give him both sufficient nutrition and elementary instruction, so that he stays healthy, while

developing at the same time the skills that will allow him to ensure himself a livelihood in the future.

During the adolescence, the **ICDS** grants food security to girls, probably to strengthen their bodies in prevision of their possible future motherhood. However, the scarce participation of young girls to the scheme, as well as the absence of any measure for boys, creates a big **gap** in governmental assistance at this stage of life: between age 11 and 18, food security is not directly guaranteed through a programme. The most effective way to overcome this deficiency would be the extension of the MDMS to middle and high schools, this way also achieving a better instruction level of the population.

When the youngster becomes an adult, if he is part of a rural household, he is entitled by the **National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)** to 100 workdays a year at minimum wage, assuring the basic means of subsistence to him and his family. To those who fall below the poverty line, the **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)** provides foodgrains at affordable prices, while particularly disadvantaged people get even better prices through the **Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)**.

At this point, the adult either ages, becoming old, or he prematurely dies: in both cases, a governmental scheme under the **National Social Assistance Program (NSAP)** will provide him or his family with the means to live on. The **National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)** is conceived to ensure living conditions for old people, while the **Annapurna** addresses those who are entitled to a pension under the NOAPS but don't receive it (due to a number of reasons discussed below), integrating the first programme. The **National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS)** is practically a life insurance which covers BPL households struck by the death of their breadwinner.

All the schemes belong to two categories: food-based or money-based. The former are distinguished by the material distribution of food to the beneficiaries, while the latter support food security through a provision in cash.

2.2 Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

Objective:

The Integrated Child Development Services scheme stems out of the necessity of fighting undernourishment and malnutrition among the most vulnerable group of the population, namely the children between 0-6 years. Data from the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau in 2006–2007 shows that there is a deficit of over 500 calorie in the intakes of 1–3 years old and about 700 calorie among the 3–6 years old, a figure that calls for an immediate response. Started more than 35 years ago in a few blocks, the ICDS is now applied at national level, and it's the only plan which targets children in those age groups. It is divided into 3 branches: the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP), which addresses children and pregnant/lactating women, the Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY) and the Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls (NPAG) which are aimed at girls in the age group 11-18 (19 in NPAG). The KSY is universally applied, while NPAG is conceived for underweight adolescents.

The main purpose of the ICDS scheme is the distribution of supplementary nutritious food to children, adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women in all rural habitations and urban slums. The mission is accomplished through a net of structures called Anganwadi Centers (AWC), which have been or are being built in practically every village and slum: in these buildings, along with the distribution of food, a basic pre-school instruction for children also takes place, getting them used to going to school and preparing them for 1st grade. Medical referral, immunizations, growth monitoring and health education are further tasks of the Anganwadis.

The ambition of the programme is to erase malnutrition of the children in the whole country, since the lack of a correct nourishment doesn't just affect their current health, but also has recognized

far-reaching impacts, for example impaired cognitive and social development, poor school performance and reduced productivity in later life, resulting in a threat to the social and economic development of India. Besides, malnutrition also exposes the infants to preventable disabilities, especially sight- and hearing-related ones.

The application of the programme to pregnant and lactating women is therefore understood not only as a help to the imminent and recent mothers, but particularly as a way to preserve the health of the children even before they are born and in the stage where their nourishment should exclusively be accomplished by breastfeeding.

The programme also covers adolescent women, with the purpose of providing them with adequate nourishment in the years preceding a possible pregnancy, in order to reduce health risks for themselves and for their kids.

The scheme also contains special measures for children suffering from more severe forms of malnutrition, who get a special food ration to make them quickly regain weight.

Dispositions:

The updated instructions of the Supreme Court led to following requirements to be met in every State/Union Territory:

- Each child up to six years of age has to get a food supply with 600 calories and 12-15 grams of protein (in form of take home ration if <3 years, otherwise hot cooked meal and morning snack);
- Each adolescent girl has to get 600 calories and 18-20 grams of protein;
- Each pregnant woman and each nursing mother has to get 600 calories and 18-20 grams of protein;
- Each malnourished child has to get 800 calories and 20-25 grams of protein;
- There shall be a disbursement centre in every settlement

The Anganwadi Centers:

The local Anganwadi Center, where the food is distributed, is the cornerstone of the ICDS

programme. It is operated by an Anganwadi worker (AWW), assisted by an Anganwadi helper or

Sahayika. The AWW is of crucial importance for the success of the programme, since it's responsible for the pre-school instruction of the children, for the cooking and provision of food, for the health and nutritional instruction of the mothers (teaching them how to feed their children properly during the different stages of their growth, for example using iodized salt to prevent blindness), for the home visits and for the provision of every other related service.

Anganwadi Workers:

Despite the crucial role played by the AWW, the load of their work, and the fact that almost all AWW are literate and experienced, they are modestly paid, and they also suffer under diverse kind of inefficiencies: on September 2009, the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers' Union staged a protest against the Government which had denied them their wage for almost 6 months. Their requests comprised also a number of other issues, like retirement plans, and preference in filling up vacant jobs as primary school teachers and ICDS supervisors.

2.3 National Maternity Benefit Scheme

(Janani Suraksha Yojana)

Objective:

The National Maternity Benefit Scheme, merged in 2005 with another scheme of the National Rural Health Mission, Janani Suraksha Yojana, is a plan of assistance to BPL women who are close to delivery. Originally, the plan was thought to ensure food security to the beneficiaries, granting 500 Rs to pregnant BPL women (for a maximum of 2 births) in a period ranging 8-12 weeks before delivery. The aim was to guarantee that the soon-to-be mothers didn't have to work to get food in the last weeks of pregnancy and those immediately

following, so they could spend their time resting and caring for the child. Also, the scheme would benefit the newborn children, who would avoid complications in pre-birth development due to undernourishment of the mother.

Since its start in 1995, the programme has experienced great modifications which spurred a debate of what objectives it should pursue. When it was merged with JSY, it caused a great confusion, since all the focus was kept on the objective of the latter (antenatal care, delivery assistance, post-partum assistance) while the original purpose of food security was almost dropped. After several debates, the Supreme Court has established new guidelines which are listed below.

2.4 Mid-Day Meal Scheme:

Objectives:

The aim of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme is twofold: first, to ensure the necessary nutrition to every child in the age 6-10, and second, to give them also primary school instruction. A special focus is placed on children living in drought affected areas, guaranteeing them adequate support during the summer vacations. So the Mid-Day Meal isn't just a programme to enforce the right to food, but is also meant somehow to lure children to come to school, creating the basis for their future livelihood.

Dispositions:

Every child in Government and Government-aided primary and upper school and all schools run by a State Government, UT Administration, or with Government money by a Local Body or Non-Governmental organisation, in every part of the country, shall receive a cooked food ration with a minimum content of 450 calories and 12g of protein containing the necessary micronutrients (like iron or folic acid). Also, every child is entitled to 100gr of grains per schoolday. At least once every 6 months, de-worming tablets are given to the students. The transportation costs shall be fully reimbursed. The cooks should be chosen

giving priority to dalits, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Funding:

The biggest part of the scheme is financed by the Central Government, which provides the 100 gr of grains and covers 1.50Rs per child of cooking costs. The States cover the remaining 0.50 Rs.per child. In the North-Eastern States the proportion is 1.80Rs to 0.20Rs.

Recommendations:-

The MDMS should be expanded to cover all children, also those not enrolled in school (this way reaching also the child labourers and street children, who are in fact the most needy), and to cover upper schools, filling the gap in food assistance in the age span 11-18

- The MDMS should cover also disadvantaged categories (for example destitute and disabled people)

- The provision for cooking cost should be increased to 3 Rs/child from the current 2, so that a nutritious and filling meal is served to every kid. Also, this amount should be periodically updated with inflation.

- MDM should be linked with nutritional education activities, so that the children learn the importance of a good nutrition

- The variety of the meals must be such that an adequate amount of fruit, vegetables, vitamins etc. is assured

- Every school serving mid-day meals must be equipped with necessary infrastructure, such as kitchen sheds and cooking utensils

- Positive discrimination in appointing cooks must be enforced in those States which still haven't accomplished the order, and episodes of discrimination against Dalit children or cooks must be properly sanctioned

- To avoid frauds, community participation in monitoring of the scheme must be strengthened

- Some healthcare services (immunization, deworming...) should be integrated in the scheme

2.5 National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

Objectives:

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a plan to ensure a sustainable livelihood to the rural population of India. It aims to provide a minimum number of workdays, at the minimum wage, to one member of every rural household of the country, so that they have the means to feed their families (and this is the reason why it belongs to the "right to food" projects). Notice that it is an Act, not a scheme, so the Government is obliged to apply it and fulfill its objectives, and is legally responsible for the failure of one of its parts. It is probably the most ambitious of the governmental schemes, since it tries to eradicate poverty and hunger and at the same time construct the modern infrastructure that the country needs to complete its development. The plan is designed to address particularly certain categories of people, for example landless labourers, who wouldn't have any means of subsistence in lean and distress seasons. A further objective of the Act is to put a stop to migration from rural areas to big cities, whose main cause is the lack of jobs in the countryside.

Dispositions:

The NREGA guarantees 100 days of work every year, and 7 hours a day, at the minimum wage to all adults who asks for a job, with the limit of one per household. The job has to be assigned within maximum 15 days from the request, through the emission of a job card, or else the State has to pay an unemployment allowance until the applicant starts to work. The worksite must be equipped with basic facilities and it has to be no more than 5 km away from the worker's house. Payments have to be done weekly. The Government also issued a list of works to be done in order of priority: at the first places are water-related interventions like conservation and harvesting, drought proofing, irrigation facilities and so on, followed by land development and connectivity. The use of contractors is forbidden, and there are some dispositions about transparency and

socialaccountability that require participation of the community to the design and monitoring of the works.

Funding:

The Central Government carries the cost towards the payment of wage, 3/4 of material cost and some percentage of administrative cost. State Governments meet the cost of unemployment allowance, 1/4 of material cost and administrative cost of the State council. Since the State Governments pay the unemployment allowance, they are heavily incentivized to offer employment to workers.

2.6 Targeted Public Distribution System

Objective:

The Targeted Public Distribution System is an instrument to subsidize food consumption among the poor population, in order to ensure that everyone can afford basic nourishment every day. The scheme is implemented through a network of 4 lakhs “fair price shops”, in which the people who possess a ration card can acquire food at discounted prices. Originally the plan was meant for the whole population, but after the reform of 1997 the focus was set on families below the poverty line, which receive now a different card with a stronger subsidy. APL families still receive a subsidy, because an abrupt withdrawal of the service was considered undesirable.

Dispositions:

BPL card holders should receive 35kg of food grain at subsidized price. The price for BPL is 50% of the price for APL. APL price was set to match the economic costs, eliminating the subsidy, but since it was not updated, inflation has reestablished it.

Funding:

The TPDS is entirely funded by the Central Government.

Results and Problems

Performance:

As stated by the Planning Commission, through TPDS the Government spends 3.65Rs to transfer 1Re to the poor. Being it a targeting institution, it’s physiological that the amount spent exceeds by some degree the amount received by the beneficiaries, but such proportions reveal an extraordinary inefficiency of the system. Also, over 57% of the subsidized grains does not reach the targeted group, and about one third of it is siphoned off the supply chain: the majority of the resources are thus stolen, depriving many BPL families of their right. Further, many errors of inclusion or exclusion have been reported, and only about a quarter of the Fair Price Shops is actually viable (that means, the return of capital is equal or higher than 12%).

BPL definition:

The first problem with the TPDS concerns the definition of who is Below Poverty Line. Currently the PL is set to 368 and 560 Rs/month, for rural and urban population respectively: it’s the income calculated to acquire a food amount equal to 2400 calories and 2100 calories. As already mentioned in this report, a common critique to this approach is that it doesn’t take all the nonfood needs of the people into account, like housing and fuel prices. Furthermore, the actual limit covers only 20% of the population, a too low segment: taking BPL and APL families together, the TPDS serves this way only 36% of the population. The BPL index should also be periodically updated to account for inflation, which hits poorpeople before anyone else.

Leakages and corruption:

The main reason behind the ineffectiveness of the TPDS scheme is the widespread corruption throughout the system, which causes massive leakages and diversions: everyday food is stolen from the supply chain and sold on the black market, where also ration cards are traded. In 2005, it was found that the majority of the grains get diverted, and only about 40% gets to the poor. In many cases, the price charged in FPS is inflated, with excesses from 10 to 14%. Here is a ranking of the States by intensity of the leakages:

Errors of inclusion/exclusion:

A fundamental reason for the high diversions in the system is big inclusion errors, occurring when APL families are entitled with a BPL card. In the States of Andhra Pradesh (36%), Himachal Pradesh (20%), Karnataka (42%), Kerala (21%) and TamilNadu (50%), the proportion of subsidized grains received by APL households is unacceptably large, undermining the very reason of the TPDS. Similarly, there are also numerous exclusion errors: daily wage earners, for example, are kept out of the TPDS because they earn enough to be APL, but in fact they are potentially food insecure.

Offtakes:

Since the beneficiaries have to buy the whole monthly ration, offtakes are low since the poorest usually can't afford to spend so much in advance. A solution would consist in allowing sale of weekly endowment.

FPS viability:

Around 3 out of 4 Fair Price Shops earn less than 12% of return on capital, making them unprofitable for the owners and thus endangering the good functioning of the TPDS. A series of proposals to make the FPS viable are: rationalizing of licenses to ensure handling of 122 tons of grains per year to every FPS, imposing a uniformly fixed margin at 2-3% of economic cost, reducing the price for APL households to induce them to lift grains from the PDS, housing FPS in public buildings.

Economic cost:

In many cases it was reported that the price set by FPS at economic cost was higher than the price of foodgrains on the market. It is therefore a priority to make the system more efficient and lower the cost of the distribution.

Universalization vs targeting:

The reform of 1997, which transformed the Public Distribution System focusing it on the BPL population, was pushed forward because of the perceived urban bias of the former system. Shrinking the beneficiaries would make the PDS more efficient while making sure that the food reached those who needed it most. After more than a decade, there's debate about whether the system should be re-

universalized, both to reach the hungry who are left out and to put an end to the black market for ration cards. Actually, the move towards a targeted distribution system has increased the offtakes of the poor, revealing that the TPDS works better for destitute citizens.

Recommendations: -

The beneficiaries of the scheme should be doubled, from 36% to 72% of the population

- There should be periodic revisions of the Poverty Line and of the subsidized prices to account for inflation and other changes in the socioeconomic environment
- The sale of ration cards on the black market should be avoided, through a system of unique identification (photo printed on the card, matching with other documents) or through some incentive to keep the original cards (like voucher lotteries)
- To minimize leakages, the Panchayat Raj Institutions should be actively engaged in identification of beneficiaries and grains delivery
- FPS must be made financially viable

2.7 Antyodaya Anna Yojana

Objective:

Antyodaya Anna Yojana is a programme conceived to enhance food security in destitute and particularly disadvantaged households. The beneficiaries receive an Antyodaya card which entitles them to 35kg of highly subsidized grains at FPS shops. The discount is considerably higher compared to the subsidy received with simple TPDS cards, since the programme addresses the poorest of the poor.

Dispositions:

An Antyodaya card is assigned to: aged, infirm, disabled, destitute men and women, pregnant and lactating women, widows and other single women with no regular support, old persons (aged 60 or above) with no regular support and no assured means of subsistence; households with a

disabled adult and no assured means of subsistence; households where no adult member can work. The price of foodgrains under the scheme are 2Rs/kg for wheat and 3Rs/kg for rice.

Funding:

The scheme is entirely funded by the Central Government.

Effectiveness:

As for the TPDS, the drop in calorie intake of the poorest quartile of the population doesn't speak in favour of the effectiveness of the scheme.

Bogus cards and black market:

The main problem associated with AAY is the presence of a large number of bogus cards as well as an active black market where these, along with the real ones, are sold. Therefore, a large quantity of grains is diverted to people who don't need such a strong subsidy.

Outlie:

Another challenge of the programme now is reaching the urban homeless population, along with slum dwellers and migrants, who don't get their cards even though their living conditions are among the hardest.

Recommendations:

- Review the criteria for eligibility in urban areas to include those who are cut out of the scheme but would need it
- To contrast the phenomenon of the bogus cards, an electronic database of the beneficiaries should be established, coupled with random checks at the FPS
- Against the voucher's black market, the same measures recommended for the TPDS should be taken

2.8 National Old Age Pension Scheme

The National Old Age Pension Scheme has the purpose to assign a retirement pension to old poor people: it is today the only pension plan for unorganized workers. The aim is to ensure food security to a segment of the population who cannot work anymore, inevitably depending on

someone else for its livelihood. Every destitute BPL person older than 65 years is entitled to a pension of 300Rs per month. The States should participate with an equal amount. The Central Government pays 300Rs pro beneficiary, while States/UT should pay other 300. The complete administration of the programme is assigned to the States since 2003.

2.9 Annapurna

Objective:

The Annapurna scheme was designed to give food security to those old people who have the criteria for being eligible under NOAPS, but don't get the money from the scheme. Since the NOAPS has been universalized in 2007, this scheme is under revision, and could be abandoned in some years. The scheme will be rediscussed in 2012 after 10 years of application, and only then its future will be decided.

Dispositions:

Under the Annapurna, 10kg of grains are transferred monthly to old destitute people who are eligible for NOAPS but don't get the pension.

Funding:

Since 2003, the scheme was completely transferred to State level.

Recommendations:-

Since the universalization of the NOAPS, the Annapurna scheme should be either abandoned (and the funds utilized to reinforce the pensions) or targeted to particularly disadvantaged aged people (like single women or disabled elders)

2.10 National Family Benefit Scheme

The National Family Benefit Scheme is practically a life insurance for poor families, with the aim of providing relief to the households who suffer the death of a primary breadwinner and suddenly find themselves without the means to buy food.

2.11 National Food Security Mission

The National Food Security Mission was started in 2007 after it was recognized that the current path of grains production wasn't fast enough to cover for the increase in the population, leading straight to shortage of food at aggregate level. The major objective of this scheme is to increase production and productivity of wheat, rice and pulses on a sustainable basis, so to preserve the food security of the country. It is accomplished mainly by diffusion of new technologies as well as modern farm managing practices. The NFSM is entirely funded by the Central Government, and is divided into three branches: Rice, Wheat, and Pulses, each one specialized in the type of crop after which it's named. The quantitative objective of the scheme is increasing the production of rice by 10 million tons, wheat by 8 million tons and pulses by 2 million tons by 2011-12. A side-effect of the policy should be the creation of more job opportunities for the rural households. In 2010 there will be a mid-term evaluation at National level of the NFSM by an independent agency, reporting on the performance and the shortcomings of the programme, and suggesting changes to be made to overcome the deficiencies. In the same year, also an Impact Evaluation Study at National level will be performed, to verify the increase in productivity of rice, wheat and pulses cultivation, as well as other factors like increased farmer's income. It is worth noting that the success of the mission is of crucial importance, since if the country is suddenly not able to produce enough food for everyone, all the other relief schemes either collapse (for example, if there is not enough food for the mid-day meals) or are useless (getting a job through the NREGA doesn't help much if there is no food to buy).

2.12 National Horticulture Mission

The National Horticulture Mission is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2005 to enhance production of every horticultural product (fruits, vegetables, flowers, plantation crops, spices, medicinal aromatic plants). The NHM aims to provide holistic growth of the sector, spreading technology, providing assistance to the farmers

through regionally-differentiated strategies and creating employment opportunities in the agricultural sector; the ultimate objective is further improve food security by assuring a sufficient variety of nutrient crops in each area. The scheme is complementary to the NFSM: instead of focusing on the quantity of food produced, with the purpose of growing enough for everyone, the NHM specializes on the quality and variety of nutrition and on the preservation of local crops. Every plant, with the exception of coconut (falling under a separate policy), is covered under the scheme: the farmers who request assistance will receive a variety of services for the improvement of their main cultivation, for example the building of water sources for irrigation.

2.13 National Food Security Act

The National Food Security Act is a passed by the UPA Government in 2013 to ensure access to adequate food at affordable prices, to further reinforce the nutritional status of poor families. As far as it is known by now, the Act will legally bind the Indian State to provide 25kg per month of foodgrains for 3Rs per kg to all BPL families of the country. The fact of being mandatory is what separates this measures from all other similar schemes like TPDS or AAY. Along with the Act, the methodology for identifying those families and the Poverty Line itself will be revamped, and a new survey will be conducted to find out the number of beneficiaries. Critics point out that the Act will probably suffer from all the classic deficiencies that the other schemes have, like targeting problems, leakages during delivery and so on, but the Government seems confident that it will work better.

3. The Right to Food Campaign

The Right to Food Campaign is a civil society informal network of organizations and individuals focused on the right to nutrition and sustainable livelihood,

which aims to influence the Government into implementing effective policies against hunger in India. It is a largely decentralized network, with a small secretariat performing some facilitating tasks like website maintenance, while the majority of the actions stem from local initiative. The activities of the RFC comprise public hearings, rallies, dharnas, padyatras, conventions, action-oriented research, media advocacy, and lobbying of Members of Parliament. The RFC has been born after a petition of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (Rajasthan) to the Supreme Court where it was requested that the country's food stocks should be used without delay to protect people from hunger and starvation. The petition gave rise to a public interest litigation known as "PUCL vs Union of India and others (Writ Petition [Civil] No. 196 of 2001)", commonly referred to as the PUCL case. To support the petition, a vast constellation of NGOs and individuals have been mobilized, giving rise to the Right to Food Campaign. The long term objectives of the RFC are the recognition of the "right to food" as a directly following from the "right to life" enshrined in Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, and the achievement of universal food security for the Indian population.

Conclusion

Under the solicitation of the Right to Food Campaign and the Supreme Court, the Government of India has started numerous schemes to eradicate hunger in its many aspects during the different stages of the life of Indian citizens. All these programmes suffer from inefficiencies, leakages, corruption, which undermine their effectiveness; also, some parts of the population needing food assistance are cut out of the governmental policies, for example the boys in the age span 11-18. Many recommendations to improve the single interventions have been collected and listed, as well as the problems still waiting for a solution. Since 2013, at the basis of food policies lies the NFSM and passed Food Security Act 2013, whose purpose is to ensure that the food produced by the country is enough for its whole

population. Although the number and scope of governmental interventions, a substantial share of the Indians still suffers from some type of hunger; it seems that many more years of implementation, monitoring, correction and innovation of such programmes are required to finally drag the country out of this pit.

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