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Food Security and Food Management: A Case Study of Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT: On the occasion of World Food Day on June 7, 2022, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya released the 4th State Food Safety Index (SFSI) of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), in which Rajasthan has been ranked 10th. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Government of Rajasthan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together to achieve food security and improved nutrition in the state to make significant progress towards Sustainable Development Goal. This cooperation will target people at high risk of malnutrition, especially women, children and adolescent girls, to have improved nutrition by 2025.

KEYWORDS: food security, management, Rajasthan, study, nutrition, authority, minister

I. INTRODUCTION

The MoU was signed on 29th October at Jaipur, in the presence of the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot, and the WFP Country Director in India, Bishow Parajuli.

The Chief Minister in his speech highlighted India's 50-year long partnership with WFP, adding, "The programme has received the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize, and this shows its importance. "With WFP's technical expertise, the benefit of the food security schemes will be effectively delivered to all the needy people in the state." [1,2]

The MoU will be effective between 2020-2023, with a focus on supporting improved food and nutrition amongst vulnerable populations in the state, especially children and women. WFP is also working with the state's Department of Women and Child Development, to improve the nutritional value and quality of take-home rations in Rajasthan. [3,4]

Chief Secretary Rajiv Swaroop recalled WFP's support in the inception of the Indira Gandhi Canal Project, a pathbreaking irrigation project for the desert state. "The partnership will help Rajasthan in better delivery of various food security schemes," he added.

"The Government of Rajasthan is committed to addressing malnutrition and strengthening food security," said Siddharth Mahajan, Principal Secretary Food Distribution and Food Supplies. "It has been doing this through the Public Distribution System, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and the Integrated Child Development Services [5,6]. This partnership with WFP will allow us to leverage technical support for strengthening these initiatives and programmes."

"WFP is focused on supporting food security and nutrition in communities by strengthening capacities, providing technical assistance and the transfer and exchange of knowledge, skills, and expertise," said Parajuli. "We are honoured by this partnership with the Government of Rajasthan in its mission to provide food security to all its citizens." [7,8]

In news, A large area of Gujarat and Rajasthan is rain-fed exposing rural population to food prices spike due to frequent droughts. The present study was conducted in year 2020 and is based on NSSO data on household consumption expenditures of rural households of these states for the year 2009 to analyse the effects that food price changes have on food expenditure and calorie intake. The results show a strong negative effect of price rises on calorie intake. The negative impact of prices of foods particularly wheat, and milk is more on richer than on poorer households as they have the capability to cut calorie intake in the event of a price rise while its opposite for coarse



cereals. The food prices particularly, milk, wheat and, pulses also have highly positive influence on food expenditure of poorer households. Rice price does not have much significant effect on food security in both the states.[9,10]

The state of Rajasthan reels under poverty and backward tag and its marginalised population solely depend upon food and nutrition entitlements mandated under The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013. Despite numerous attractive features, Rajasthan has not done much improvement in its health and nutrition indicators. With 31.8% children under 5 years of children stunted and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) as high as 30.3 (Source – NFHS), Rajasthan continues to be one of the bottom five states of the country.[11,12]

Mothers who received full antenatal care (ANC) is 9.7%. Breastfeeding children age 6-23 months receiving an adequate diet is 8.4% and the percentage of children between 6-8 months with minimum acceptable diets is 30.1%. 46.8% of women and 60.3% children are anaemic in the state. Similarly, anaemia has bearing on productivity.

There is a rising obesity among the men and women. 14.1% adult women and 13.2% adult men are obese. Good sanitation, hygiene and safe drinking water have a bearing on good health and nutrition. Strangely, 45% households in Rajasthan are using improved sanitation facility.[13]

Different studies show high prevalence of undernutrition, worm infections, skin infection and respiratory infections, including tuberculosis, filariasis, back pain and micronutrient deficiency disorders like anaemia were widespread among the tea garden labourers.

NFHS fact sheet	IMR	Stunting
NFHS 3	65	43.7% (under 5 children)
NFHS 4	41	39.1% (under 5 children)
NFHS 5	30.3	31.8% (under 5 children)

Good nutrition is essential for a healthy immune system, higher order cognitive ability, growth and productivity and achieving demographic dividend. Rajasthan's perpetual poverty and inequity can much be attributed to its malnutrition and food insecurity.

II. DISCUSSION

The government ensures food security at the household level in two ways: through the Public Distribution System (PDS) and through ensuring entitlements of poor households through programmes such as 'Food for Work'. The author shows how these two government interventions should be extended to maintain the food security of the most vulnerable in the state, in both emergency and year-round situations.[14,15]

Key findings suggest that:

- Recurrent severe droughts in the state are enough justification for continuing food security initiatives through a Public Distribution System.
- At an aggregate level the state has achieved "self-sufficiency" in food production in a normal year. But normal years are very few and far between and the "self-sufficiency" achieved by mining scarce water resources may not be viable from either economic or environmental perspectives.
- Over half the population in rural areas survives on its own meagre production and incomes from casual farm and non-farm employment, so there is actually little food security at the household level.[16,17]



- The Public Distribution System in the state is functioning but the system of fair price shops (FPS) and door-step delivery could be made more efficient.

The following changes could improve support to vulnerable households in the severe drought situation currently facing the state:

- Central government releasing large food stocks for Food for Work Programmes.
- Increasing the quota of foodgrains distributed the household via the PDS.
- Removing the distinction between households below and above the poverty line until the next crop is harvested.
- Increasing the labour requirements of the Food for Work Programme to enable more vulnerable people to access entitlements.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in India and the Rajasthan government have joined hands to improve the Targeted Public Distribution System (TDPS) in the state.

An agreement was signed in this regard .

The partnership entails, among other things, the use of digitisation, data aggregation, performance dashboards for monitoring of the TDPS, thus providing a real-time and long-term solution to improve the food and nutritional security for millions, the WFP said in a statement.

"This is a strategic partnership for creating impact at scale by taking advantage of the end-to-end computerisation of the food safety net that works through the Targeted Public Distribution System. Together with the government, we will use the data and insights to facilitate operational and policy decision making," said Bishow Parajuli, WFP India representative and country director.

This partnership between the WFP and the Department of Food and Civil Supplies of the Rajasthan government is part of a wider strategic Memorandum of Understanding signed late last year. Rajasthan covers nearly 45 million beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act, served through a network of 26,657 fair price shops, the statement said.

Some of the highlights of this partnership include improved targeting of beneficiaries to ensure that those in need are not excluded and those at risk are included, support in making the supply chain efficient like transport optimisation and introduction of digital applications, and enhancement of capacity to enable data-based decision making to make continuous assessments and improvements.[18]

III. RESULTS

Rajasthan is amongst the most impacted states in terms of deaths due to starvation post-pandemic, even when hygienic and nutritious food is a basic right of the people.

Jawahar Foundation is working to resolve the problem of food security for the people in our operating areas.

To eradicate hunger in Rajasthan, Jawahar Foundation started a community kitchen by the name Swabhimani Bhoj which serves nutritious & clean meals at Rs 1 to all. Currently operating in Ajmer, Banswara, Bhilwara & Jaipur, we have served close to 2,00,000 meals in the span of just 9 months. This community kitchen is a continuous activity and soon will be operational in other cities of Rajasthan.

Jawahar Foundation is dedicated to providing healthcare for all. During the pandemic, we supported the local medical authorities in Ajmer & Bhilwara to quickly set up multi bed Covid Care Wards & installed Oxygen Distribution Pipelines at the major hospitals. We also provided the local healthcare centres at Pushkar and Gulabpura with Oxygen Generators of 45 Lpm each.[19]



Our teams have also spread awareness about safety from the Corona Virus and distributed more than 100,000 masks and 14,000 sanitizers. We also provided Sanitizer Sprinkler Machines to help in the sanitization of areas, where the large sanitization trucks could not reach. We even went on to sanitise the Brahma temple in Pushkar.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

After the completion of an exercise for rectification of errors relating to the beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) through mapping and seeding, the Congress Government in Rajasthan has launched action to strike off the families ineligible to get foodgrains under the scheme. The State has also sought inclusion of more families in the purview of food security. Newly appointed Food and Civil Supplies Minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas said here on that the beneficiaries who had become financially empowered could voluntarily get their names removed from the NFSA list. This would help the poor and needy people get the foodgrains allocated under the food security scheme, he said. No legal action would be taken against the financially well-off persons, Government employees and other ineligible persons who get their names removed as soon as possible, Mr. Khachariyawas said. The work for lifting and distribution of foodgrains allotted under the NFSA and the Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana would be expedited in the districts with slow progress, he added.

The records related to over 7 lakh families in 95 blocks of the State were corrected during the first phase of mapping and seeding earlier this year, while the work for seeding of ration cards of about 9 lakh families getting the benefit of NFSA with their Jan Aadhaar cards was taken up during the second phase.

As part of efforts to monitor the distribution of foodgrains, the quantity of allotted wheat is being recorded in the point-of-sale (POS) machines within the stipulated time-frame. The State Government has also sought an increase in the number of NFSA beneficiaries on the basis of the present population instead of the 2011 Census, after refixing of ceiling to extend the benefits to the needy families.

The Centre has set the ceiling of 4.46 crore people under the food security scheme in Rajasthan, for whom 2,30,882 metric tonnes of foodgrains are allocated per month. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has urged the Prime Minister to provide food security to an additional 74 lakh people on the basis of the State's estimated population of 8 crore in 2021.[20]

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