

A Study on Poverty Reduction and Food Security in India

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ABSTRACT

Poverty is an issue in modern India as large number of people is still living Below the Poverty Line (BPL), Of course in the world many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have been suffering seriously about this problem. Poverty reduction means designing, implementing and targeting appropriate methods to ensure that scarce resources are allocated in such a way get maximum impact on the poor and decrease their level of deprivation and vulnerability (Sen.1999, World Bank, 2001). Decentralisation is linked to poverty reduction in many ways. While decentralization has become a development strategy of many developing countries, its linkage to poverty reduction in particular has been the subject of recent time. Poverty is an issue in India as large number of people is still living below the poverty line (BPL). poverty is related to basic needs like food ,shelter, cloth vis-à-vis safe drinking water, health and education. Father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi was worried about the poor of our country. After independence, Government of India was serious to tackle the problem. Several steps were taken to eradicate poverty in the country. However, poverty is more conspicuous in rural India than urban India in terms of number of population. Ministry of rural development has been spending huge amount of money for the rural development where major share of money is spent on poverty eradication programmes.

1. POVERTY REDUCTIONS SCHEMES

There are innumerable state and centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) for poverty reduction and rural development for which the state continue to engage only the district administration rather the democratically elected local government institutions. The union and state governments have designed these schemes and issued guidelines, the District collector (as chairman DRDA and inspector of panchayats for all the tiers), the project officer DRDA,BDO(as the executive authority for the village and block level panchayats) administer almost all those schemes.

The policies and programmes have been designed with the aim of alleviation of rural poverty which has been one of the primary objectives of planned development in India. But employment programmes were not perceived as major instrument of poverty alleviation until the beginning of the 1980s in most states of the country. They were expanded in the sixth plan period with the introduction of the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). Subsequently, some other public employment programmes were adopted viz. Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) National Food for Work Programme(NFFWP). The programmes were targeted at the poor and were generally identified with poverty alleviation programmes. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(NREGA) was passed in the year 2005. The ongoing programmes of Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana and National

Food for Work Programme were subsumed within this programme in the 200 of the most backward districts of the country. The NPEGA scheme opens up tremendous possibilities of creating a livelihood resource base of the rural poor. The scheme has high expectations in terms of employment generation, alleviation of poverty, food security, halting, migration and overall rural development.

India provides an example high rate of economic growth not producing poverty reduction at high rate(especially during the 1990s).Although, there is a consensus that growth during the 1990s has been associated with poverty reduction , it is difficult to say whether the rate of poverty reduction during the period was higher than in the earlier decade. The percentage of population below the poverty line was officially estimated at 27.8% during 2004-2005 and the average decline in poverty between 1993 and 2004-2005 was estimated to be 0.74% per annum. The official estimate for the rate of decline in poverty during that period is 0.79% per year. A low average productivity of the workforce could be due to the deficiency of capital relative to labour and the use of backward technology. The role of productive employment in transforming economic growth into poverty reduction in that kind of situation can be conceptualized in terms of the following process. When a high rate of economic growth leads to sustained increase in productive capacity, employment opportunities with rising levels of productivity should be generated.

AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptually, the linkage between output growth, employment and poverty can be analyzed at both macro and micro levels. At the macro level, the link between the income aspect of poverty and output growth can be conceptualized in terms of the average productivity of the employed workforce which, in turn, gets reflected in low levels of real wages and low levels of earnings in self-employment. At the household level, the same linkage between poverty and employment operates through the type and productivity of economic activities in which earning members of a household are engaged, the level of human capital of the members of the workforce, dependency burden that limits participation in labour force as well as the availability of remunerative employment.

In the process, the poor would be able to attain higher productivity and increase their income in existing occupations or move to new occupations involving higher levels of productivity, skills and/or better technology. The result of the process described above could be reflected in (i) improved productivity of various sectors and occupations, (ii) a shift in the structure of employment towards sectors and occupations with higher levels of productivity, and (iii) increases in real wages and earnings from self-employment.

FOOD SECURITY INDIA

The food security is a physical, environmental, economic and social issue. Dr.APJ Abdul Kalam opined that Food Security can be studied from three different viewpoints. First, availability of food, which depends upon production and distribution, second ,access to food that is guided by purchasing power, and third, food absorption. Food absorption implies being able to assimilate the food consumed in order to live a healthy and long life.

The national food is a first step in ensuring the universal food security bill (NFSB) was passed by the both houses of parliament, and was given a nod by the president on September 12, 2013, and has now become an Act. The legislation is a landmark, and perhaps the largest food security program in the world.

THE NEED FOR FOOD SECURITY BILL (FSB)

Through this scheme provides for 5kg per person per month of cereals – rice , wheat and coarse grains at Rs 3.00, Rs 2.00 and Rs 1.00 per kg respectively to priority households and 35 kg per month Antyodaya households. The person covered may be as many as 75 percent of rural and percent of urban population . The Targeted public distribution system (TPDS), which provides food grains.

And oil at highly subsidized prices to the poor people . the main problem with the TPDS is that it does not effectively reach the poor people. The main problem with the TPDS is that it does not effectively reach the poor.

The effectiveness of PDS is reaching the poor consumers was examined by Himanshu and Sen (2013) as follows.

To sum up

- PDS has a large exclusion error and doesn't reach most of the poor
- It provides only a fraction of food grains consumption of the poor households.
- The money value of income transfer through PDS grains is also modest.
- The poor get a bit more than 10 percent of total subsidy expense of the government.
- More than 40 percent of the PDS grains do not reach the consumers.

The linkages between growth, employment and between growth, employment and poverty reduction, and especially the role played by productive employment in transforming the benefits of economic growth into poverty reduction.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SECOND GREEN REVOLUTION

India has to now embark upon the second Green Revolution which will enable it to further increase its productivity and diversity in the agricultural sector. The second Green Revolution will have the farmers in focus, farming technology as the friend, food processing and marketing as partners and the consumers as the angles to be satisfied. From now onwards to 2020, India would have to gradually increase the production to around 400 million tonnes of grains. The increase in the production will have to be done under the reduced availability of land from 170million hectares to 100 million hectares with reduced water availability. We should also learn to diversify to meet specific consumer preferences, export markets and also in the interest of ecological balance. This is to be achieved through information access to all stakeholders and not with central controls or restriction of movement of agro products.

The challenges for the scientists and technologies would be in the area of development of seeds that would ensure good yield even under constraints of water and land with ecologically balanced farming. The challenges for the scientist is indeed a knowledge graduation from characterization of soil to the matching of the seed with the composition of the fertilizer, water management and evolving new preharvesting techniques for such conditions. The domain of farming would enlarge from grain production to food processing marketing. Newer forms of co-operative entities are required to be established for ensuring maximum benefit to the farmers. E-marketing concepts may also be put into practice to provide farmers choice in selling. Some of the areas which need focus are: soil up gradation, dry land agriculture, temperature and salinity resistant seeds and minimum water cultivation.

WTO IMPACT ON INDIAN FOOD SECTOR

The WTO aims at improving the standard of living, employment and output and optimal utilization of the world resources. It will ensure preservation of environment all over the world. The thrust of its activities will be to secure better share of growth in international trade, especially, for the least developed countries.

India has always been an agrarian economy with its objective of providing food for its growing and huge population. After the independence the policy had been to achieve self-sufficiency in foods. With this objective of self-sufficiency and bringing up the Indian agriculture and industry on par with the world India food sector has always been given a protected environment. As a result food sector continued to be in its unorganized form. It is the middlemen who have been playing major role rather than producers and end users. Of course there has been steady growth in the industry owing to domestic demand but never on an export oriented.

India is a agricultural nation where agricultural commodities contribute 25per cent in total exports of the country. In national income of India, 31per cent is obtained from agricultural sector. Keeping in view the aforesaid facts, it is necessary to study the possible effects will fall on India agriculture due to WTO agreement. With this background the India food sector entered the uneven playground of world trade by signing the WTO. The section of GATT, which deals on agriculture, related aspects are known by the name called Agreement on Agriculture having manifold impact on trade in agricultural products are food sections of population alone

ENSURING FOOD SECURITY

Food security is a physical, environmental, economic and social issue. Issues of food security are part of a bigger whole. Sustainable land and water management must be seen as directly linked to food security. The major challenge is to produce additional food while conserving depleting natural resources. It is also providing physical, economic and ecological access to food and nutrition security at the household level. Nutrition security must be given integrated attention by emphasizing horticulture animal husbandry, fishery, millets, pulses and several other resources for which India is traditionally known. Food security must not be based on market, but rather on self-reliance and sufficiency. The elimination of hunger and malnutrition is not just a food problem. It is linked to poverty and population growth. Rising food output is essential but so are the slowing of population growth and maintaining the ecological balance. Food banks at grass root levels should

be well maintained. Identification of the vulnerable individuals and families suffering from endemic hunger and malnutrition. The programme also lays considerable stress on improving the country's overall food and nutritional security status.

The food security equally involves researchers, politicians, local communities and also multinational corporations. Security is an issue of governance. Governance implies discipline in various instruments of government like legislatures, executives and judiciary. This discipline should imply objectivity and selflessness. It requires transparency in working and honesty in transaction, development without security is unthinkable. From the angle of human development security has many dimensions namely food security, social security, personal security, and environmental security.

IMPLEMENTING THE FOOD SECURITY

In implementing the food act, there are some lessons we can learn from Brazilian experience, Brazil was in fact the first country in the world to legislate a right to food. This was part of the now – famous *fome zero* or zero Hunger programme of the Brazilian government that has become known worldwide as a major successful intervention in the sphere of food security. In India our experience with the public distribution system (PDS) shows that the PDS worked best where there was political commitment. The experience of Tamil Nadu and Kerala establish this point. Tamil Nadu is known to have well functioning universal system of delivery of cheap food. Studies of the public distribution system in Tamil Nadu have identified strong political commitment and careful monitoring by bureaucracy as elements of the success of PDS in the state.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The activists and the civil society, the national food security 2013 falls for short of a comprehensive legislation on food security. The Act is indeed an important effort to ensure that the majority of population in India has access to adequate quantity of food at affordable prices. It proposes to cover 75 percent of the rural population with an entitlement of 5 kg per person per month of food grains at issue prices of Rs. 2 and 3 per kg for wheat and rice respectively. The poorest households will receive an additional 10 kilograms of food grains per household to protect their existing allocations.

The food subsidy cost of implementing the FSA is estimated at Rs1, 24,502 corers for the fiscal year 2013-14. The cost is estimated to increase to Rs, 140,192 and 157,701 corers in 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively. The incremental food subsidy over and above the existing Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) which is the additional cost to budget, is estimated Rs.23,951 corers. This is equivalent to 0.2 percent of GDP.

2. CONCLUSION

The basic minimum services like water primary education, primary health care and above all poverty reduction have to be ensured through local government. Food security is directly connected with poverty reduction. But still today food security remains unrealized dream if issues such as poverty and population growth are not dealt with effectively. Many food security schemes are

being introduced by the government, strong in concept but weak his implementation. The problem of found security is multifaceted. If population increases at present rate it is not only food security but problems of shelter will also a rise.

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