

Predicament of Hunger, Poverty & Food Security among the Pvtgs of Jharkhand

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Abstract: India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. In the last two decades, India has successfully clinched economic reforms, which has led to GDP growth of 7.1%. However, the continuing problem of persistent hunger, under nutrition and food insecurity is still a challenge in front of the government which demands urgent attention as to improve and save the lives of millions of people. Jharkhand is 28th state of the country and very well known for its cultural-ethnic diversity and mineral resources. In spite of this the state is considered as poorest among rest of the states and has a very high incidence of poverty, hunger and alarmingly high level of malnutrition particularly among the PVTGs. These tribal groups are the most deprived segment of the society whose dwindling population is a concern for the state as well as the Center, leads a wanderer's life in jungles and hills. The paper makes a modest attempt to analyze the linkages between Poverty, Hunger and Food Security and how the food security programmes are working effectively for the benefit PVTGs communities residing in Jharkhand.

Keywords: Poverty, Hunger, PVTGs, Jharkhand, Food Security

I. INTRODUCTION

India, with a population of over 1.2 billion, has seen tremendous growth in the past two decades. Gross Domestic Product has increased 4.5 times and per capita consumption has increased three times. Similarly, food grain production has increased almost two times. However, despite of phenomenal industrial and economic growth, while India produces sufficient food to feed its population, it is unable to provide access to food to a large number of people, especially the marginalized section of the society. Unfortunately, it is home to the largest undernourished and hungry population in the world. 194.6 million people go hungry everyday and about 15.2% of the total population is undernourished. This makes India as a home to a quarter of all undernourished population in the world. The Global Hunger Index 2016 ranks India at 97 out of 118 countries.

In the present day, India has successfully clinched economic reforms, which has led to GDP growth of 7.1%. However, the continuing problem of poverty, persistent hunger, under nutrition, starvation death and food insecurity is still the biggest threat on the country itself. Although the government has initiated programs to help alleviate the condition of poor, the programs have not been completely effective.

India at present finds itself in the midst of a paradoxical situation: endemic mass hunger coexisting with the mounting food grain stocks. This is due to the demand deflation brought about by falling agrarian incomes over the past decade. The food grain stocks available with the Food Corporation of India (FCI) stand at an all time high for last many years. Despite this, over 300 million people go without two square meals a day. With over 230 million people ensure about accessing their daily bread, 50% of children undernourished and stunted, and about 68 out of 1000 dying before the age of one year, food security is undoubtedly a major concern and top priority for the Indian government today.

In recent years, Jharkhand has experienced numerous number of hunger related deaths and the victims are mostly belonged to the marginalized section of the society. It is also reported that, in spite of various admirable programmes initiated by the government; PVTGs have no other option except for begging just to fill their empty stomach. India, as part of the world community, has pledged to halve hunger by 2015, as stated in Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1, but the present trends show that this target is not executed at all. No doubt, India thrives to write a success story in terms of poverty reduction. In just two decades, the national poverty rate has been declined. But to what degree did the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group / Scheduled Tribes benefit from this general ambiance of improving living standards.

In this backdrop, considered the current situation of the PVTGs dwelling in Jharkhand, the paper tries to present how hunger & poverty both are the foremost reason behind to have food insecurity. The paper also highlights the role of various policies intervention related to Food Security to prevent Food insecurity as well as their performance particularly in these areas.

II. LINKAGES BETWEEN HUNGER, POVERTY & FOOD SECURITY

Poverty hunger, malnutrition and mortality indicators are all linked with each other and so their answer too. Somehow, ensuring Food security to the needy is one of the possible measures to overcome today's awful circumstances. Though India successfully achieved self-sufficiency by increasing its food production and also improved its capacity to cope with year-to-year fluctuations in food production, however it could not solve the problem of chronic household food insecurity.

Food insecurity is a complex issue having several dimensions such as, poverty, unemployment, famine, gender discrimination, equity, starvation, food and nutritional practices, human growth, political elements, natural calamities etc. Poverty has been recognized globally both as cause and consequence of food insecurity. Therefore, the issues of food security can be broken down to production of food grains. Price policy, public procurement of food grains, buffer-stock,

public distribution and international trade on one side, population policy and planning, and overall socio-economic development policy related to income and employment generation, education, health, safe drinking water, housing and sanitation on the other (Ghosh, 2000).

Intensity of poverty is higher among the scheduled tribes in comparison to other communities. It is indisputable to say that deprivation of land and rights over land are most prominent in tribal areas which set a relation between the resource less poor and chronic poverty. The tribals in the forested regions are the worst sufferers of resourcelessness, and choicelessness besides loss of civil rights (Anand Kumar, 2004). Their continuous feeling of abandon, feeling of political and economic exclusion, strengthens an argument of violence primarily due to chronic poverty, deprivation of entitlements for an infinite period of time. Needless to say that majority of the chronic poor living in and around the forested regions of Jharkhand is historically marginalized groups; such as Scheduled Tribes, PVTGs and poor forest dwellers, who have been living in the forest from the time immemorial

The tribal population in the forested regions have been historically marginalized and alienated from their basic source of livelihood; land, forest and water. All these seem to have accentuated their poverty and malnutrition due to absence of people friendly policy thrusts. Even during last six decades of economic planning, the inadequate policy thrust over the years on people-centered policies has accentuated their poverty and miseries which is results into persistent hunger.

Hunger is one more aspect indicating food insecurity. Hunger is not just an expression of poverty, but a brutal face of Poverty. The triumph of food security therefore involves eliminating existing hunger and reducing the risks of future hunger. The food grain production is touching new heights every year and producing more than sufficient to feed people without relying on external support. However, sufficient food production is not the only criteria to provide food security in a country and eliminate hunger. One of the critical factors that contribute to large scale hunger is the purchasing capacity of the households for nutritious and quality food. Hunger is the uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of food or craving appetite. Poverty and Hunger is very much co-related to each other and it is the Poverty which is the principal cause of Hunger. To overcome this situation government has initiated various Social Protection Programmes and 'Food Security' is one of them. Food Security Programme has now become an important tool in the fight against Hunger. This programme focuses on promoting food security and nutrition, health, and education, particularly of children, women and people coming from marginalized section. Providing subsidized food to the needy and poor somehow help in battle to eradicate Poverty and Hunger.

III. FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMMES IN INDIA

India is one of the few countries which have experimented with an extensive continuum of programmes for improving food security. It has already made substantial progress in terms of overcoming transient food insecurity by giving priority to self-sufficiency in food-grains and through procurement and public distribution of food-grains, employment programmes, etc. However, despite a significant reduction in the incidence of Poverty, chronic food insecurity persists in a large proportion of India's population. Some of the Food Security Programmes are briefly stated here.

Public Distribution System: The PDS in India is perhaps the largest distribution network of its type in the world, with a network of more than 5 lakh Fair Price Shops claiming to annually distribute commodities worth more than Rs. 15000 crore to about 16 crore families. These shops distribute a total of 35 kg of wheat and rice to about 6.5 crore. BPL families pay Rs. 4.2 per kg for wheat and Rs. 5.6 per kg for rice. Another 2.5 crore poorest families get Rs. 35 per kg of food grains at a highly subsidized rate of Rs. 2 per kg for wheat and Rs. 3 per kg for rice.

India's Public Distribution System (PDS) was introduced during the Second World War to address food security concerns in the face of scarcity, with the intention of maintaining price stability. Public Distribution System (PDS) is the most important step taken by the Government of India towards ensuring food security. In the beginning the coverage of PDS was universal with no discrimination between the poor and non-poor. Over the years, the policy related to PDS has been revised to make it more efficient and targeted. In 1992, Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was introduced in 1,700 blocks in the country. The target was to provide the benefits of PDS to remote and backward areas. From June 1997, in a renewed attempt, Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced to adopt the principle of targeting the 'poor in all areas'. It was for the first time that a differential price policy was adopted for poor and non-poor. Further, in 2000, two special schemes were launched viz., Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and the Annapurna Scheme (APS) with special target groups of 'poorest of the poor' and 'indigent senior citizens', respectively. The functioning of these two schemes was linked with the existing network of the PDS.

Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS): The ICDS is the main outlet for public spending on child nutrition. It operates through centres in villages, called *Anganwadi*, where local workers provide nutrition and health services. The Integrated Child Development Services(ICDS) Scheme was launched on 2nd October ,1975 is one of the flagship programme of Government of India and represents one of the world's largest and unique programme for early childhood care and development. It is dedicated to the children and nursing mothers, as a response to the challenge of providing pre-school non-formal education on one hand and breaking the ferocious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduce learning capacity and mortality. The beneficiaries under the scheme are children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers. The scheme having the objective as, to improve the nutritional & health status of children in the age group 0-6 years, to lay the foundation for proper psychological the child, physical and social development of the child, to reduce the incidence of mortality, malnutrition and school dropout, to achieve effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development, and to enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health & nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS): On August, 1995, Mid-Day Meal Scheme was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Education) with the objective of “Universalization of primary education by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously impacting on nutrition of students in primary classes”. This scheme covers students of class I to V in government elementary schools, elementary schools aided by government and primary schools run by local bodies.

In 2007, the name of the scheme has been changed to ‘National Programme of Mid-Day Meals in Schools’. Mid-Day Meal Scheme is essentially a child welfare programme. The idea behind this scheme was to develop the ignored aspect of child’s development that is physical health of pupils, by providing nutritional diet in schools. This scheme is considered to be the most potential incentive for children belonging to disadvantaged class of society to attend school regularly and improve their health and academic status at the same time. Under the MDMS, the Government of India provides free food grains while the cooking costs are shared with the state governments.

IV. WHO ARE PVTGs? (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups)

Interestingly but sadly, the anthropologists, sociologists, social workers, administrators and all other such people who have been involved with the tribes and their problems, either on theoretical plane or on practical grounds, are not having the same idea regarding the concept and the definition of tribe. The term ‘tribe’ is derived from the Latin word ‘tribus’. In India commonly they knew as *Adivasi*. These groups or Adivasis are considered to be the earliest inhabitants of India. The term Adivasi is commonly translated as ‘indigenous people’ or ‘original inhabitants’, and literally means ‘*Adi* or earliest time’, and ‘*vasi* or resident of’. The state and discourse in India, however, reject the term “indigenous peoples”, as it is considered “divisive, undermining the unity of the Indian nation” (Ghurye in Chopra 1988). The government instead recognizes most Adivasis under the Constitutional term “Scheduled Tribes” derived from a schedule in the Constitution Order of 1950. While the Order declared 212 tribes located in 14 states as Adivasis, as of now there are 533 tribes identified by the Government of India.

In accordance to the provisions conferred in the Clause (1) of Article 342 of the Constitution of India, the notification of STs is state specific and their identification is done on the basis of the following characteristics- a) Primitive Traits (b) Distinctive Culture (c) Geographical Isolation (d) Shyness with contact with the community at large, and Backwardness.

However, it was observed that not all these identified STs were in the same level of development. Some of them were at much lower level of development when compared to other STs. It is also seen that in the matter of devolution of funds for development of ST, a major share was taken by those who were more assertive. As a result the other marginalized STs were left out in the process of development. In order to ensure the development of these communities, certain groups were identified for the first time in 1975-76 and thereafter in 1993, which were regarded as the poorest of the poor amongst the STs. They were identified as Primitive Tribal Group. The criteria fixed for identification of such PTGs were (a) Primitive Agricultural level of technology (b) very low level of literacy and nearly stagnant or diminishing population.

On the basis of the above mentioned criterion the state government submits proposal for identification of PTG. They are examined in the ministry in consultation with planning commission. If a community on examination fulfils the prescribed criteria, than that community is identified as PTG. Till today 75 tribal communities have been identified as PTG spread over 14 states and one union territory. In 2006 the government of India proposed to rename “Primitive Tribal Group” as “Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group”. PTG has since been renamed Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group by the Government of India.

The particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in general are socially as well as economically very backward in the sense that they have little access to the resources for their development, low rate of literacy, relatively small population size, dwindling in numbers and some of the groups are at the verge of extinction. Most of PVTGs are facing shrinkage of their original habitat even uprooted and getting cultural shock with some kind of alien diseases from which they are not able to cope.

V. FOOD SECURITY AMONG PVTGs OF JHARKHAND

Jharkhand is one of the tribal dominated states, which means ‘land of forest’. There is a long struggle-full odyssey has been associated with its origin, spreading over a century, which can be traced back to the early 1900s. The vision of having a separate state did not become a reality, until 2nd August, 2000, when the Parliament of India passed the *Bihar Reorganization Act* to create the state of Jharkhand, carving 18 districts out of Bihar to form the state of Jharkhand on 15th November 2000. On that day, it became the 28th state of India. Jharkhand, shares its border with the state of Bihar in the north; Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in the west; Odisha towards its south, and West Bengal in the eastern region. An area of 79,714 km² makes it the 15th largest state of the country whereas the population of 32,966,238 people, makes it hold the 13th among the states. The industrial city Ranchi is its capital and Dumka has been designated as its sub-capital. Administratively, Jharkhand is divided into 5 divisions containing twenty-four districts. These divisions are Palamu, North Chotanagpur, South Chotanagpur and Kolhan. However, at the time of formation, the state had only 18 districts. Later, six more districts were carved out by reorganizing these districts. These districts are Palamu, Garhwa, Latehar, Chatra, Hazaribagh, Koderma, Giridih, Ramgarh, Bokaro, Dhanbad, Lohardaga, Gumla, Simdega, Ranchi, Khunti, West Singhbhum, Saraikela kharsawn, East Singhbhum, Jamtara, Deoghar, Dumka, Pakur, Godda, and Sahebganj.

Out of the total population of Jharkhand, 26.02 % (2011 census) people are Scheduled Tribes. For better administration and welfare of the tribal’s, the regions dominated by tribal population have been categorized as ‘Scheduled Area’ as per the provisions mentioned under the 5th schedule of the Indian Constitution. Out of the 24 districts of the state, 15 districts have their entire or partial areas under this special status. These districts are Ranchi, Lohardaga, Gumla, Simdega, Latehar, Palamu, Garhwa, West Singhbhum, Saraikela Kharsawan, East Singhbhum, Dumka, Jamtara, Sahebganj, Pakur and Godda. There are 32 different tribal communities, major one being *Santhals, Oraons, Mundas* and *Hos*. Other

tribes include *Asur, Baiga, Banjara, Bathudi, Bedia, Binjhia, Birhor, Birjia, Chero, Chick-Baraik, Gond, Gorait, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lohra, Mahli, Mal-Paharia, Parhaiya, Sauria-Paharia, Savar, Bhumij, Kol and Kanwar*. The predominant communities have their strong presence in the state that is reflected through their festivals, rituals, music, language and literature. Their lifestyles are also so distinct that they have influenced the characteristics of the areas they dwell. In fact, in some of the districts of Jharkhand, the tribal population predominates over the non-tribal one.

Tribes like *Asur, Pahariya, Sabar, Birhor, Birjia, Korwa, Mal Pahariya, Parhaiyas and Sauriya Pahariya* have been under special scrutiny on account of their primitiveness, backwardness and declining population. These nine tribal communities are among the thirty two communities which come under Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Together they account for a population of 0.273 million (Census 2001) which is very nominal part of the total tribal population. According to the reports of the Health Department, the populations of the *Birhor, Birjia, Baiga and Sauriya Pahariya* are declining. PVTGs remain the most isolated and disadvantaged indigenous tribal groups with perceptible reduction in their population. Malnutrition, Malaria and dysentery are rampant in PVTGs villages and the access of these communities to the social welfare programmes remains limited. Having considerable minerals & resource, the people here are still deprived of basic amenities, especially the most marginalized populace like PVTGs.

There are strong evidences that the state is one of the most food secure states in the country. The malnutrition figures indicate an affirm of nutritional emergency in the state. The reports of hunger deaths keep on appearing regularly in the newspapers. The important estimates have been made from NSS data, NFHS data and HUNGAMA (2011) report. As per the estimates by IFPRI, Jharkhand is classified as one of the states with very high levels of Hunger in terms of Hunger Index. The nutritional status of people in general and women and children in particular are very low in Jharkhand. Infant Mortality Rate has decreased from 54 (NFHS III, 2005-06) to 46 (NFHS IV) in rural tribal areas and when it comes exclusively for the nine PVTGs residing in Jharkhand, picture became a horrifying tale; diminished population is the evidence of this. The high infant mortality rate, less life expectancy, high prevalence of anaemia is showing that the health status is not so good among the PVTGs. According to the report of NFHS IV, 88% of children belonged to PVTGs community are underweight in the state. 71.5 % children 6-59 months, 63.7% pregnant women, 67.5% all women of age 15-49 years are anaemic (NFHS IV).

The figures of neonatal mortality, post neonatal mortality, infant mortality, and child mortality have been underneath the national average. Mothers who received financial assistance under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) for births delivered in an institution are 47.4% but unfortunately a very few of the Pregnant women from PVTGs community hardly received financial assistance due to lack of proper information. Even their pregnancies are not registered due to this they do not have Mother and Child Protection (MCP) card. The percentage of Mothers who had full antenatal care is only of 5.5%. These data shows that the government fails to ensure nutritional security to the women and children belonged to PVTGs through its world's largest security programme, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

In Jharkhand Food Security Bill was mooted in 2013 and it came into force in the year 2015. Today Government has failed to combat food insecurity due to their inability to implement the 2013 Food Security Act among the PVTGs, which has become a threat to their mere existence. Most of the families belonged to PVTGs community actually doesn't have any type of ration cards which is necessary to have subsidized food grains.

The government has initiated a scheme to provide cash sum of Six hundred Rupees per month to these community, but majority of them are not even having their Bank Account or even don't aware about this. Linking Aadhar Card with PDS has created a huge mess as still people do not have Aadhar Card. Here, the role of local representatives has become important as it is the responsibility of them to take care about these things, but unfortunately nothing such instigated by the local administration. The Planning Commission in its report had concluded that "PDS seems to have failed in serving the objective of making food grains available to the poor. If it had been successful, the average consumption levels of cereals should not have fallen, as it has consistently over the last two decades".

To ensuring food security to the children the government of India launched Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) in, August 1995 and has now become a part of daily school routine across the country. Today Mid-Day Meal Scheme provides cooked meal to approximately 160 million school children, making it the largest school feeding programme in the world. Mid-Day Meal is an effective incentive for children and families facing difficult circumstances, especially where a majority of families are unable to meet dietary needs of their children due to extreme poverty and food insecurity. The programme increases the benefit of schooling by promising improved nutritional status of the participating child. Taking into account of the performance of Mid-Day Meal schemes for these groups, piteously it is reported that still most of the children are not enrolled themselves in the schools and rest of the few are school dropout. These instances evidently demonstrated the operation of Food Security Act among these groups and how much PVTGs are benefitted from this programme. The performance of the MDMS is very poor and failed to accomplish its objective in these areas.

VI. CONCLUSION

Poverty and Hunger both are the serious threat to Food Security. A large section of people suffer from food and nutrition insecurity in India, the worst affected groups are landless or land poor households in rural areas and especially the people belongs to the PVTGs group. The food insecure people are disproportionately large in some regions of the country, such as economically backward states like Jharkhand where high incidences of poverty, malnutrition and instances of hunger deaths are accounted.

To combat with these coercion government has initiated National Food Security Act in the year 2011, which comprises with programmes like Public Distribution System, Mid-day Meals Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services Programme, Annapurna Yojana and Antyodaya Programmes to ensure physical accessibility for food but still it could not solve the problem of chronic household food insecurity. However the extent, to which it was expected, has not at all been achieved. In Jharkhand where considerable number of tribals including nine Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups is residing, government fall short to take care of continued existence. Also the wage employment programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Programme (MGNREGA) and Old Age Pension Scheme also not

succeed to fulfill its aspiration. Reside in far-flung depressed areas, remote from roads, and the reach of administration and government programmes is weakest there. It is the biggest reason behind their deprivation. Sadly, after decades of half-hearted government intervention, the pace of Food Security in Jharkhand is dawdling. Though, it is moving but is not fast enough. There is an urgent and responsible steps need to be taken to tackle with this silent-emergency.

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