

FOOD INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES, POLICIES AND INDIA'S PERFORMANCE ON THE GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX**Dr. Mudasir Hassan Bhat**

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Abstract:

India has long history of food intervention and management programmes to address the poverty hunger and malnutrition. Food management aimed at procurement of food grains from farmers at remunerative prices, distribution of food grains to consumers at affordable prices, particularly the vulnerable sections of society and maintenance of food buffers for food security and price stability. These programmes aim at effective food management system, distribution and access, and improving the nutritional status of masses. The Government of India introduced National Food Security Act to address the issue of food security in a comprehensive manner. The main objective is to provide food and nutritional security by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to enable them to live a life with dignity. These programmes has contributed significantly in improving the hunger and malnutrition and gradually improved its status, but the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2017 suggests a rise in hunger between 2014 and 2017. India's rank slipped from the 55th rank in 2014 to 100th out of 119 countries in 2017. The paper attempts to analyze various food intervention programmes and current status of hunger and malnutrition in light of the recent drop in India ranking.

Key Words: Distribution, Food security, Hunger, Intervention & Nutrition

1. Introduction:

The introduction of food intervention programmes in India dates back to 1940s against the backdrop of the Bengal famine when the rationing system was introduced. When the food situation improved in the 1950s, the programmes were also relaxed. However, in the wake of acute food shortages during the 1960s, prior to the Green Revolution, the rationing system was revived. The intervention again became irrelevant in the early 1970s when food production considerably increased due to successful operation of Green Revolution. The surplus food situation not only provided adequate food supply in the urban areas, but also led to the accumulation of food stocks with the Food Corporation of India (FCI). By the end of the 1970s, FCI had accumulated food stocks of approximately 20 million tones, which was sufficient to overcome any famine like situation. In the wake of high incidence of poverty levels, as reported by NSSO in the mid-1970s, three important food intervention programmes were introduced- the Public Distribution System (PDS) for food grains, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Food for Work (FFW). Over the years several new programmes have been launched and some have been restructured with the growing experience of administering the programmes. At present, there are several Poverty Alleviation and Employment Programmes which greatly contribute to food security by increasing the purchasing power of the poor households [1].

The Ministries of Government of India, specially the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation, Food and Public Distribution, Rural Development, and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, are responsible for the implementation of these programmes and to achieve the dimensions of food security in one way or another. Food production is a direct mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture whereas providing economic access through Public Distribution System (PDS) and stability in supply through provision of buffer stocks is the direct mandate of Department of Food and Public Distribution. Absorption or provision of nutrition through mid-day meals and Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), etc comes within the purview of the Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Health. After achieving near self-sufficiency in staple food, the Indian government has launched a number of programmes for increasing production (supply side) through the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation as also distribution and consumption (demand side) through the Department of Food and Public Distribution. Today, around half of India's population is covered by one or other scheme of the public distribution system, in which subsidized staple food is made available to the people (State of Indian Agriculture, 2011-12).

2. Performance of the Food Management System:

Food management is mainly aimed at procurement of food grains from farmers at remunerative prices, distribution of food grains to consumers at affordable prices, particularly the vulnerable sections of society and maintenance of food buffers for food security and price stability. The instruments used in this respect, are minimum support price (MSP) and Central issue price (CIP). The Food Corporation of India (FCI) is the nodal agency which undertakes procurement, distribution, and storage of food grains in the country. Wheat and rice are purchased from the farmers in states where there is surplus production. A pre-determined price known as Minimum Support Price (MSP) is paid to farmers for their crops. Procurement at MSP is open-ended, while distribution is governed by the scale of allocation and its off take by the beneficiaries. The off take of food grains is primarily under the targeted public distribution system (TPDS) and other welfare schemes of the Government of India. Under TPDS special cards are issued to BPL families to sell them food grains at specially subsidized prices with effect from June 1997[2]. The food management system and food price policy thus consists of three major instruments, such as, procurement at minimum support prices, the maintenance of buffer stocks, and the public distribution system. The procurement and buffer stocking activity falls largely within the ambit of the Central Government and has a critical impact on macro level availability and market prices of food grains.

Minimum Support Prices and Procurement: Minimum Support Prices have been a cornerstone of the agricultural policy since 1965. MSP is a minimum guaranteed price for the farmers offered by the Government for their produce in case the market prices fall below that level. If the market offers higher price than MSP, the farmers are free to sell at that price. The main objective of the support price policy for agricultural commodities is to assure remunerative prices to the farmers with a view to encourage higher

production and investment, and at the same time, it also aims to safeguard the interest of the consumers by ensuring supplies at reasonable prices. The minimum support price (MSP) for major agricultural products announced each year is fixed by the State on the basis of recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). The CACP recommends MSP for 24 important crops. FCI undertakes open-ended procurement, distribution, and storage of food grains with other central and state agencies. Coarse grains are procured by state governments and their agencies. The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED), National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Limited (NCCF), Central Water Commission (CWC), and Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) are the central nodal agencies that undertake procurement of oilseeds and pulses under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) when the market rates of these commodities fall below MSP. However, procurement operations are found to be successful largely for rice and wheat and that too only in a few states like Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh (Economic Survey, 2013-14). During the last decade the MSP has increased sharply as compared to the earlier decade. The MSP for paddy (common variety) increased by 69.6 percent during 2004-05 to 2009-10 as compared to a 9.8 percent rise during 2000-01 to 2004-05. Similarly, MSP for wheat increased by 71 percent in the second half of this decade as compared to 8.6 percent in the first half. The MSPs for the years 2008-09 and 2009-10, are a clear departure from earlier years, in order to reach the goal of maintaining buffer stocks of foodgrains to meet the situation of scarcity arising out of crop failures and encouraging farmers to grow more for food security concerns. They had similar objectives earlier as well, but, there was a concern in recent years because of the slowdown in foodgrain yields and lower procurement prices, particularly in 2006-07 (Table 1). India had to import 5 million tonnes of wheat during this year [3].

Table 1: Minimum Support Prices of various Agricultural Commodities (Rs per Quintal)

Year	Rice	Wheat	Maize	Gram	Sugarcane
1990-91	205	225	180	450	23.00
1999-000	490	580	415	1015	56.10
2002-03	550	630	490	1225	69.50
2004-05	560	640	525	1425	74.50
2005-06	570	650	540	1435	79.50
2006-07	580	750	540	1445	80.25
2007-08	645	1000	620	1600	81.18
2008-09	850	1080	840	1730	81.18
2009-10	950	1100	840	1760	129.84
2010-11	1000	1120	880	2100	139.12
2011-12	1080	1285	980	2800	145.00
2012-13	1250	1350	1175	3000	170.00
2013-14	1310	1400	1310	3100	210.00
2014-15	1360	1450	1310	3175	220.00
2015-16	1410	1525	1325	3500	230.00
2016-17	1470	1625	1365	4000	230.00

Source: Agriculture Statistics at a Glance, (2014) and Economic Survey, (2014-15).

The government in each season announces MSPs for major agricultural commodities well ahead of the sowing season so that farmers can take informed decisions on cropping. The substantial price increases in many crops are a noticeable feature especially at a time when the global food prices were also on a rising trend (Economic Survey, 2012-13). The Government has announced the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for 2014-15 Seasons. The MSP of Rice has been fixed at Rs 1360 per quintal and that of wheat has been raised from Rs 1400 per quintal during 2013-14 to Rs 1450 per quintal during marketing session 2014-15. MSP of Maize has remained the same at Rs 1310 of the previous year. The MSPs of Gram has been raised by Rs 75 per quintal and fixed at Rs 3175 per quintal. MSPs of sugarcane for 2014-15 seasons has been announced and fixed by the government at Rs 220 per quintal.

The growing concern for maintaining sufficient stocks of foodgrains to meet the future declines in production and resulting food insecurity seems to be the reason for the continuous increase in MSP, and food grain procurement has certainly responded to this by increasing significantly in the recent years [4]. There was significant increase in procurement of rice and wheat in the year 2008-09 (56.8 million tonnes) as compared to that in 2007-08 (39.8 million tonnes). The year 2011-12 and 2012-13 also witnessed significant increase in total procurement of wheat and rice, i.e. 63.3 million tones and 72.1 million tones respectively (Table 2).

Table 2: Production, Procurement and procurement (in million tonnes)

Year	Rice			Wheat			Total
	Production	Procurement	Percentage*	Production	Procurement	Percentage*	
1999-00	89.6	17.3	19.3	76.3	14.1	18.5	31.4
2000-01	84.9	20.1	23.6	69.7	16.3	23.4	36.4
2001-02	93.3	22.1	23.7	72.8	20.6	28.3	42.7
2002-03	71.8	16.4	22.8	65.8	19.1	29.0	35.5
2003-04	88.5	22.8	25.8	72.2	15.8	21.9	38.6
2004-05	83.1	24.6	29.6	68.6	16.8	24.4	41.4
2005-06	91.8	27.7	30.2	69.3	14.8	21.4	42.5
2006-07	93.3	25.1	26.9	75.8	9.2	12.1	34.3
2007-08	96.7	28.7	29.7	78.6	11.1	14.1	39.8
2008-09	99.1	34.1	34.4	80.7	22.7	28.1	56.8
2009-10	89.1	32.0	36.0	80.8	25.4	31.4	57.4

2010-11	96.0	34.2	35.6	86.9	22.5	25.9	56.7
2011-12	105.3	35.0	33.2	93.5	28.3	30.3	63.3
2012-13	105.2	34.0	32.3	93.5	38.1	40.7	72.1
2013-14	106.5	31.0	29.1	95.9	25.1	26.2	56.1

Source: Agriculture Statistics at a Glance (2014) and State of Indian Agriculture (2012-13)

Percentage* - procurement as % of production of Rice and Wheat

In recent years there has been a high procurement as percentage of production of rice and wheat mainly because of high production and surpluses of several agricultural commodities even in deficit states like Bihar, Assam, Eastern U.P. which have started generating surpluses of certain cereals (State of Indian Agriculture, 2012-13).

Public Distribution System: The PDS is the most important intervention made by the Government of India to achieve national food security. Although the objectives and working of PDS have undergone several changes since its introduction, it effectively remains a food intervention programme. The FCI buys foodgrains from the farmers at an administered price (MSP), and then arranges to sell these to consumers at subsidized prices by allocating the foodgrains to different states which, in turn, manage their respective PDS. In the beginning, the coverage of PDS was universal with no discrimination between the poor and non-poor. However, over the years, the policy related to PDS has been revised to make it more efficient and targeted. In 1992, the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was introduced in 1700 blocks to provide the benefits of PDS to remote and backward areas. From June 1997, in a renewed attempt, the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced to adopt the principle of targeting the 'poor in all area's (Table 3). It was for the first time that a differential price policy was adopted for the poor and the non-poor. Further, in 2000, two special schemes were launched- the Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY) and the Annapurna Scheme (APS) with special target groups of 'poorest of the poor' and 'indigent senior citizens', respectively.

Table 3: Some Important Features of PDS

Name of the Schemes	Year of Introduction	Coverage Target Group	Latest Volume of Transfer per Family	Issue Price (Rs per Kg)	
				Rice	Wheat
PDS	Up to 1992	Universal	-	2.89	2.34
RPDS	1992	Backward blocks	20 kg of foodgrains	3.77	2.80
TPDS	1997	Poor and non-poor	35 kg of foodgrains	3.50*	2.50*
				7**	4.50**
AAY	2000	Poorest of the poor	35 kg of foodgrains	3	2
APS	2000	Indigent Senior Citizens	10 kg of foodgrains	Free	

Source: Cited in Food and Nutrition Security in India (A.N. Sharma).

*- BPL, **- APL

The PDS is designed to improve food security at the household level in India. Maintaining price stability to provide incentives for adequate production of foodgrains, making foodgrain available at reasonable prices to the poor and vulnerable sections of the country, raising the food consumption level of the poor and preventing the situations of food scarcity in food scarce regions are the major objectives of the PDS. This entailed movement of foodgrain from the surplus producing states to the deficit States under the procurement and allotment mechanism (Table4).

Table 4: Net Availability, Procurement and Public Distribution of Foodgrains(Million tones)

Year	Net Production of Foodgrains	Net Imports	Net availability of Foodgrains	Procurement	Public Distribution
1990	149.7	1.3	144.8	24.0	16.0
2000	183.6	-1.4	168.3	35.6	13.0
2001	172.2	-2.9	156.9	42.6	13.2
2002	186.2	-6.7	189.5	40.3	18.2
2003	152.9	-5.5	170.6	34.5	23.2
2004	186.5	-6.5	183.3	41.1	28.3
2005	173.6	-6.0	170.0	41.5	31.0
2006	182.5	-2.3	181.9	37.0	31.8
2007	190.1	-4.7	183.7	35.8	32.8
2008	210.2	-9.7	183.5	54.2	34.7
2009	205.2	-4.1	189.5	60.5	41.3
2010	190.8	-2.2	189.2	56.1	43.7
2011	214.2	-2.9	203.1	64.5	47.9
2012	NA	NA	NA	73.4	44.9
2013	NA	NA	NA	58.9	44.5
2014	NA	NA	NA	59.8	43.5

Source: Economic Survey (2014-15).

The PDS provides commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, edible oils and kerosene to identified and registered beneficiaries through a network of dedicated retail outlets, known as fair price shops at fixed prices that are normally lower than open market prices. The PDS with its national network of over 4.5 lakh fair price shops and distributing commodities worth more than Rs 300 billion annually to about 160 million households is perhaps the largest distribution network in the world. It has evolved over many decades as an important instrument of food policy in India to overcome scarcities, controlling prices of essential commodities in

the open market and ensuring physical availability of essential supplies at affordable prices for the poor. The operation of the PDS is supplementary in nature and does not meet the entire food requirements of any household. However, it does effectively protect the household by providing a basic entitlement at affordable prices and at convenient locations through its wide network of ration shops, fair price shops and control shops wide spread across the country [4]. Currently, around half of India's population is covered by one or other scheme of the public distribution system, in which subsidized staple food is made available to the people.

3. Nutrition Programmes:

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) are two major initiatives undertaken by the Government of India for improving the level of nutrition in the country. These programmes are well established, popular, and comprehensively designed. These schemes have universal coverage and cater to the entire population in all regions and states.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS): Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is the most important nationwide nutritional programme launched in 1975, with the aim to improve the nutritional and health status of pre-school children in the age group of 0-6 years, to lay foundation of proper psychological development of the child, to reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school drop outs, to achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation amongst the various department to promote child development and to enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education. These objectives are attempted to be achieved through the provision of a package of services such as basic health check-ups, immunization, referral services, supplementary nutrition, non-formal pre-school education, nutrition and health education for women and the required advice on essential health practices and nutrition. As a centrally-sponsored scheme implemented through state governments, these services are provided through a wide network of child-care centre popularly known as anganwadi, where the beneficiaries including infants, mothers and pre-schoolers gather on a daily basis to receive the services provided for them [4].

Today, ICDS is regarded as the world's largest community-based child development programme. Besides UNICEF, other international agencies such as the World Bank, Cooperation for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) and the World Food Programme (WFP) has also extended support to it. However, despite its expansion and popularity over the last three decades its impact has been limited. It is seen that the problem of child and maternal malnutrition still persists. Child malnutrition has not declined significantly and it is reported that anemia among children and women has increased with as many as one-third of all adult women being undernourished. The services have also had a limited coverage and outreach. The solution thus lies in increasing its coverage to ensure effective universalization, changing and improving its design and planning its effective implementation in order to achieve its objectives (S. M. Dev & A. N. Sharma, 2010).

Some of the studies have highlighted that activities such as cooking, feeding, washing dishes and cleaning the anganwadi consume almost all the time, leaving anganwadi workers and helpers with little time for other important activities, such as growth monitoring, nutrition education and pre-school education. Likewise, child-care and nutrition education of the mother are also neglected. Thus, contributing to the food security of the household, ICDS is not effective in addressing the issues of prevention, detection, and management of undernourished children and mothers (A.N. Sharma, 2014). ICDS has to be restructured with higher allocations of funds and effective implementation in order to reach its goal.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme: The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE), popularly known as the Mid-day Meal Scheme, was introduced in August 1995, with the objectives similar to that of ICDS. While the ICDS scheme focuses on the 0-6 years age group pre-school children, this scheme has twin objectives of improving the nutritional status of primary school children and of increasing enrolment, regular attendance and retention in schools. This scheme provides a free cooked meal to primary school children of government, government aided and schools run by local bodies. The foodgrains are supplied by the central government free of cost to the state governments, while the transport cost and cost of cooking the meal was entirely borne by the state governments. However, due to inadequate funding, some state governments resorted to distributing foodgrains instead of providing cooked mid-day meals. Under the orders of Supreme Court, the scheme was revised as well as universalized in 2004 to provide a cooked mid-day meal containing atleast 300 calories and 8 to 12 grams of protein to all children in the government and government aided primary schools. The scheme was extended to upper primary schools from October 2007. Though the scheme is considered to be popular and successful, it is faced with several problems. The problem faced by the scheme mainly relate to quality, quantity and irregularity of the mid-day meal that is provided to children. It was also indicated that in most states children were not provided micronutrient supplements or de-worming medicines. It was also reported that the undesirable involvement of teachers in supervising the cooking and serving of the meal resulted in detraction from their teaching responsibilities. The other problems that the scheme is faced with are the lack of adequate infrastructure for the clean and hygienic functioning of the programme, improper and unsafe storage of food and other cooking ingredients, as well as low and adulterated quality of materials used. This serious neglect of quality and hygiene has recently even led to the sickness and death of school children. The 11th Five Year Plan has given the following action points for improving the performance of MDMS: (i) MDM to be managed by the local community and PRIs/NGOs, and not contractor-driven: civic quality and safety to be prime considerations; (ii) sensitize teachers and others involved in nutrition, hygiene, cleanliness, and safety norms to rectify observed deficiencies; (iii) involve nutrition experts in planning low cost nutrition menu and for periodic testing of samples of prepared food; (iv) promote locally grown nutritionally rich food items through kitchen gardens in school, etc.; (v) revive the School Health Programme; disseminate and replicate best practices adopted by states; (vi) provide drinking facilities in all schools on an urgent basis; (vii) display status regarding supplies, funds, norms, weekly menu, and coverage in schools to ensure transparency; (viii) central assistance to cooking cost should be based on the actual number of beneficiary children and not on enrolment; (ix) promote social audit; (x) online monitoring (S.M Dev & A.N. Sharma, 2010).

National Food Security Mission: National Food Security Mission (NFSM) is a centrally sponsored scheme, launched in August, 2007-08 with three major components, viz. NFSM-Rice, NFSM-Wheat, and NFSM-Pulses. It is a crop development scheme of the

Government of India that aimed to increase the production of rice, wheat and pulses by 10, 8 and 2 million tonnes respectively by the end of XI Plan. The main objectives of the scheme was to increase the production through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a sustainable manner in certain identified districts of the country; restoring soil fertility and productivity; creating employment opportunities; and enhancing farm level economy to restore the confidence of farmers of targeted districts. The Mission has continued during XII plan with new target of additional production of 25 million tonnes of food grains consisting of 10 million tonnes of rice, 8 million tonnes of wheat, 4 million tonnes of pulses and 3 million tonnes of coarse cereals by the end of XII Plan and promotion of commercial crops like cotton, jute & sugarcane (Annual Report, GOI, 2015-16).

The basic strategy of the mission is to promote and extend improved technologies i.e., use of better quality seeds, enhancing farm efficiency through improved agronomic practices like line sowing, System of root Intensification (SRI), soil amendments, Integrated Nutrient Management (INM), Integrated Pest Management (IPM), water use efficiency and resource conservation technologies along with capacity building of farmers with effective monitoring and better management in the high potential districts in order to bridge the yield gaps. Under the scheme of the NFSM, pulses are a focus area because of its increasing demand-supply mismatch in the country. About 50 per cent of the funds have been allocated for promoting cultivation of pulses (State of Indian Agriculture, 2015-16). During the Eleventh Five Year Plan, NFSM was implemented in 142 districts for rice in 15 states, 142 districts for wheat in 9 states and 468 districts for pulses in 16 states. The scheme was approved with an outlay of Rs 4883 crore for the period from 2007-08 to 2011-12. A sum of about Rs. 3381 crores has been spent till 31 March, 2011 (State of Indian Agriculture, 2011-12). In 2012-13, six north eastern states, viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim were included under NFSM-Rice and Hill States, viz. Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand under NFSM-Rice and Wheat and J&K under NFSM-Wheat. In 2013-14, an amount of Rs.2,250.00 crores was provided under NFSM as Plan Outlay. Action Plan for the implementation of NFSM by the States were conveyed to them and an amount of Rs.2,044.85 crores have been released to the States. Thus, NFSM has been implemented in 561 districts of 27 States of the country during 2013-14 (Annual Report, GOI, 2013-14).

The major activities covered under NFSM include cluster demonstrations of rice, wheat and pulses, distribution of improved varieties seeds, need based plant and soil management, resource conservation techniques, cropping system based trainings and local initiatives; award for best performing districts etc. A three-tier monitoring mechanism was inbuilt in NFSM at national, state and district levels (Table 5). At national level General Council (GC) under the chairmanship of Union Agriculture Minister was constituted to oversee the implementation of NFSM and take policy decisions for mid-term corrections. National Food Security Mission Executive Committee (NFSMEC) under the chairmanship of Secretary (A&C) periodically reviewed the plan of implementations and the progress of the programme of each state. National Level Monitoring Team (NALMOT) headed by Mission Director with members from Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, State Agriculture Universities (SAUs), Crop Development Directorates and Project Management Team (PMT) conducts field visits regularly for monitoring and technical guidance to states.

Table5: Impact of National Food Security Mission (in million tonnes)

Component	2006-07*	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Rice	93.35	96.69	99.18	89.09	95.98	105.30	105.24	106.50
Wheat	75.81	78.57	80.68	80.80	86.87	94.88	93.51	95.90
Pulses	14.20	14.76	14.57	14.66	18.24	17.09	18.34	19.30
Total	217.28	230.78	234.47	218.11	244.78	259.30	257.10	264.80

Source: State of Indian Agriculture, (2011-12) and Economic Survey of India, (2014-15).

* Production (Pre NFSM)

NFSM since its implementation has not only achieved the targeted food grains production but has also widened the base of food grains production with significant contribution from low productivity districts. During the XII Plan, Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs has cleared the continuation of NFSM programme with allocation of Rs.12,350 crores including Rs.90 crores for Technology Mission on Cotton and Rs 60 crore for Jute Technology Mission.

National Food Security Act, 2013: The Government of India introduced National Food Security Bill in the Lok Sabha on 22 December, 2011 in order to address the issue of food security in a comprehensive manner. The main objective of the Bill is to provide food and nutritional security by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to enable them to live a life with dignity. As per the provisions of the Bill, it is proposed to provide 7 kg of foodgrains, comprising rice, wheat and coarse grains, per person per month, at prices not more than Rs 3 per kg of rice, Rs 2 per kg of wheat and Rs 1 per kg of coarse grains. Besides provisions for nutritional support to women and children and meals to special groups such as destitute and homeless, emergency and disaster affected and persons living in starvation, the Bill seeks to benefit up to 75 percent of the rural and 50 percent of the urban population for subsidized foodgrains under the Targeted Public Distribution System [5]. The Bill also provides for a maternity benefit of Rs 1,000 per month for six months (Economic Survey of India, 2011-12). Further, the entitled persons are also provided food security allowance by the concerned State/ Union Territory governments, in case of non-supply of foodgrains or meals. Provisions for reforms in the TPDS such as, doorstep delivery of foodgrains, application of information and communication technology (ICT) including end to end computerization, leveraging 'aadharr' for unique identification of beneficiaries have also been made in the Bill. Provisions have also been made for transparency and accountability including disclosure of records relating to the PDS, social audits and setting up of vigilance committees besides an elaborate grievance redressal mechanism. However, the bill was highly controversial, and despite introduction in Parliament in December 2012 was passed only in late August 2013, after initially being promulgated as a Presidential Ordinance on July 5 (National Food Security Ordinance, 2013).

In September 12, 2013, India enacted National Food Security Act, (also known as Right to Food Act), the largest food security programme in the world, covering approximately two-thirds of its population. The Act aims to provide subsidized foodgrains (cereals only) through legal entitlements by various food security schemes such as MDMS, ICDS, PDS, to over 800

million people, covering about 75 percent of rural population and 50 percent of urban population. Foodgrains under TPDS are made available at subsidized prices of Rs 3 per kg for rice, Rs 2 per kg of wheat and Rs 1 per kg of coarse grains for a period of 3 years from the date of commencement of the Act. Thereafter, prices are to be suitably linked to MSP. Further, the Act provisioned that the quantum of cereals should be 5 kg per person per month who belong to the 'priority household', and 35 kg of foodgrains per household per month belonging to existing Antyodaya Anna Yojana. The Act also promises that the pregnant women, lactating mothers and children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years will be entitled to meals as per the prescribed nutritional norms under ICDS and MDMS, besides the maternity benefit of not less than Rs 1,000 to pregnant women and lactating mothers. Under the Act, the State wise coverage is determined by the Central Government by using National Sample Survey (NSS) for household consumption for 2011-12. States/UTs are assigned the work of identification of eligible households. The Central Government will provide assistance to states in meeting the expenditure incurred by them on transportation of foodgrains and its handling.

The food subsidy cost of implementing the National Food Security Act (NFSA) is estimated at Rs. 124,502 crores for the fiscal year 2013-14. The cost is estimated to increase to Rs. 140,192 and Rs. 157,701 crores 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 the budget, is estimated at Rs. 23,951 crores. This is equivalent to 0.2 percent of GDP. The Act thus, needs to be carefully evaluated to take into account not only the cost of food subsidy, but also the additional costs of setting up new institutions and bureaucracies, and the additional cost that are likely to arise if there are political pressures to protect the existing beneficiaries, many of whom are not grandfathered even after many revisions of the bill. When these are taken into account, the Act may entail significantly higher burdens than currently envisaged (Mishra P, 2013).

4. Conclusion:

The recent drop in ranking in Global Hunger Index (GHI) is more due to change in methodology. The GHI combines four component indicators: the proportion of the undernourished as a percentage of the population; (14.5 per cent in India), the proportion of children under the age of five suffering from wasting (21 per cent in India), proportion of children under the age of five suffering from stunting (38.4 per cent in India) and mortality rate of children under the age of five 4.8 per cent in India. The change in four parameters and weights is as (i) Undernourished population (1/3rd weight), (ii) Child wasting (1/6th weight), (iii) Child stunting (1/6th weight) and (iii) child mortality below 05 (1/3rd weight). GHI scores are based on current and historical data that are continuously being revised and improved by the United Nations agencies that compile them. The year on year comparisons of a country's scores, or indicators is not accurate. The methodology and data are revised to reflect the changes and these revisions ensure the most accurate depiction of current and historical hunger levels in a given country. Therefore India's 2014 GHI rank of 55 and 2014 GHI score of 17.8, are not comparable to the 2017 GHI rank of 100 and corresponding GHI score of 31.4. The conclusion that India has slipped 45 places in the GHI ranking is erroneous also misrepresentation.

5. References:

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