



Decentralization Community



Food and Nutrition Security Community



The Decentralization Community **The Food and Nutrition Security Community** **Consolidated Reply**

Query: Food Security through Panchayats, from Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection Department, Chennai (Advice; Comparative Experiences)

Compiled by [Alok Srivastava](#) and [Gopi N Ghosh](#), Resource Persons; additional research provided by [Happy Pant](#), Research Officer and [Bidisha Pillai](#), Research Associate
7 January 2006

Original Query: By K. Rajaraman, Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection Directorate, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Chennai

Posted: 27 December 2005

Among important dimensions of poverty is deprived existence in hunger and malnourishment, sometimes with serious consequences. A very important issue that continues to evade an early solution is total elimination of hunger and starvation and guaranteeing of food security for all. The role of Panchayats in this appears crucial for the reasons that PRIs are the ones to sense and see hunger early and fully as they are the closest to people, and as PRIs "can" (at least in states where PRIs are empowered) guarantee food security through sincere implementation of a variety of RD programs.

Some states have in recent time come out with some systems to handle hunger through PRIs. Even in states like Kerala or TN, PRIs may not probably need to look at starvation and hunger as serious issues, but they certainly need to look at malnourishment. In this context we have a number of social safety nets in existence – PDS, Annapurna (free rice for old aged pensioners), National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), Swarna Jayanti Gram Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP - which comes bundled with free rice for old aged pensioners), Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), Mid Day Meal (MDM) etc. Such a galaxy of useful schemes could combat starvation and hunger, if only there was less leakage, greater convergence between these schemes whose targets are often the same poor, more commitment amongst the administration system and greater decentralization to PRIs coupled with greater transparency and accountability of PRIs.

In order to develop possible strategies for involving PRIs in food security administration, I would like to know from the members:

1. How could PRIs become involved in the provision of food security as representatives of citizens or as agencies of government?

2. What kind of food security monitoring systems can PRIs setup and how do we help them to do that?
3. Are there models/best practices in any of the above in any state worthy of replication?

Responses were received, with thanks, from:

1. **A. Bandyopadhyay**, ICAR, New Delhi ([Response 1](#)) ([Response 2](#)) ([Response 3](#))
2. **Nira Ramachandran**, Consultant UNICEF, New Delhi ([Response 1](#)) ([Response 2](#))
3. **Ranjit Kr. Maiti**, P&RD Dept, Govt. of West Bengal, Kolkata
4. **Subhash Mendhapurkar**, SUTRA, Solan (HP) ([Response 1](#)) ([Response 2](#))
5. **A.Kalamani**, Panchayati Raj Programme, Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad
6. **B.L.Kaul**, Society for Popularization of Science, Jammu ([Response 1](#)) ([Response 2](#))
7. **Alok Srivastava**, UNDP, New Delhi
8. **Gopi Ghosh**, FAO, New Delhi
9. **Mahtab S Bamji**, Dangoria Charitable Trust, Hyderabad
10. **Manju Agrawal**, Amity Institute of Behavioral & Allied Sciences, Amity University, Lucknow
11. **Vinod Vyasulu**, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore ([Response 1](#)) ([Response 2](#))
12. **Ranjit K. Maiti**, Joint Secretary, P&RD Dept., Govt. of West Bengal, Kolkata

Further contributions are welcome!

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[Comparative Experiences](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

Members, through their responses, appreciated the pertinence and timely nature of the query and stressed that since Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been designated by the constitution to address local development issues; hunger, malnutrition and food security being amongst the greatest concerns in most rural areas, certainly fall within their purview.

Food security is impacted by a series of complex and inter-related factors having several economic, social and institutional dimensions. Some of the **possible areas of intervention** for the PRIs to make people more food-secure could be to augment agricultural production - right from **ensuring provisioning of good quality inputs, efficient and equitable management of natural resources, creating and managing rural infrastructure, and acting as pressure groups for bringing in favorable reform in farm policy.**

This task, though is easier said than done, as an important pre-requisite is the **empowerment and training of the PRIs** to enable them to function effectively. Members cited, through specific examples, the difficulties and opposition that Panchayats face during supervision of basic social services like education and health care. They identified a clear need to not only make the Panchayats aware of their role and rights, but also **create an enabling environment for the PRIs to function.** One step in this

direction could be to **pass requisite laws** (to supplement the existing legislative provisions) that would recognize Panchayats as democratic (local self government) bodies vested with specific powers as well as accountability.

Integration of the PRIs into the Public Distribution System (PDS) at the State level by linking the PRIs with the Food and Consumer Affairs Departments: This would enable the PRIs to better identify the beneficiaries and monitor lifting and distribution of essential food items. The [Jan Kerosene Pariyojana](#) of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is a model that could be followed for the PDS system as well. The scheme involves the Panchayats to bring in efficiency, transparency and accountability in the supply of kerosene.

Members also felt that while it is advisable to engage PRIs into the PDS, it is equally important to **empower people** with options that would enable them to **produce more food and earn their livelihood**. An example given was that of the [WFP - MSSRF 'Food for Social Work' initiative](#). This project focuses on creating simple local solutions for income generation involving the elderly, pregnant women and other vulnerable groups within the communities. The work identified is locale-specific and payment is made in the form of grains or cash, thus ensuring their food security even during the most difficult seasons.

Promoting dryland farming is another area that could be developed to ensure food security to people in a sustainable manner. PDS, distributing mainly rice and wheat, has led to a steady decline in the cultivation of locally grown and nutritive small millets, sorghum, pulses, etc. Reclaiming fallow land and promoting the cultivation of these crops would provide improved nutrition to these communities for which a well defined dryland agriculture policy may be needed.

An interesting case study - [Deccan Development Society's Alternative Distribution System](#), aims at improving local food production, local storage and equitable local distribution. The emphasis is on reclaiming fallow land for cultivation, engaging women in farm work, and promoting community managed grain banks – thereby, addressing issues of livelihood options, sustainable farming practices, and food insecurity, in one go.

Panchayats could refer to some of the successful models as placed below, to explore local solutions to food insecurity collectively. A combination of policies and an environment that would enable the Panchayats to exercise their powers would be required - for PRIs to be effectively engaged in providing food security, and in setting up proper implementation and monitoring systems for the same.

Comparative Experiences

All India

Food for Social Work Programme (From [Nira Ramachandran](#), Consultant UNICEF, New Delhi)

An innovative programme creating local livelihood opportunities in local surroundings including assisting the Anganwadi worker, helping to prepare/serve mid-day meals, establishing village woodlots for fuel, maintaining cleanliness and sanitation in the village, conducting home visits to new mothers the old and infirm, escorting girls and small children to distant schools or the Anganwadi centre, helping in the PHC, etc. Some advantage of this scheme is that the activities are year-round and includes vulnerable groups. Payment is made in the form of grain or a mix of cash and foodgrain. See Food For Social Work below for more.

Jan Kerosene Pariyojana, Ministry of Panchayati Raj (from [Alok Srivastava](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

It seeks to establish a system where diversion of PDS supplied kerosene to the black market and misuse through adulteration is minimized. Under this scheme the PRIs at all levels i.e. village level, block level and district level have been given the responsibility of monitoring the scheme. At the village, block and district level, Vigilance Committees have been formed. The committees consist of elected representatives of the village, block and district panchayats and necessarily include women members. A pilot has been launched in 485 blocks across various states. It is a model that could be replicated for the PDS as well. See Details.

Andhra Pradesh

Alternative Public Distribution System (from [A.Kalamani](#), Panchayati Raj Programme, Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad)

Deccan Development Society's programme on Alternative Public Distribution System had three aims: Local food production, local food storage and local distribution. In this experience the traditional diversity based cropping systems aiming food and fodder security using locally viable organic methods of cultivation were promoted through community action especially women. The millets and grains produced were stored at the community level and distributed to poor families at subsidized price through a card system during the food scarcity season. It is an interesting model of conserving local resources and ensuring food security in an equitable manner. See DDS below for more on this programme.

System of Rice Intensification Method (from [Mahtab Bamji](#), Dangoria Charitable Trust, Hyderabad)

Andhra Pradesh government's directive to farmers not to grow rice in rabi season has met with lot of resistance and hence now the government is urging farmers to at least adopt the System of Rice Intensification method of cultivation where water and seed requirement is greatly reduced. Yields are higher if management is proper. A combination of advocacy and education about SRI method of cultivation and nutrition education to ensure that polishing is minimised and excess water after cooking (ganji) is not discarded, would contribute to nutrition and environment security. Know more about SRI here.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

WFP-MSSRF Food for Social Work Programme (From [Nira Ramachandran](#), Consultant UNICEF, New Delhi)

<http://solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res06010602.doc> (42.5 KB)

The project document provides insight on how local institutions like the panchayats could engage in creating local livelihood options resulting in enhanced food security.

The Karnataka Local Fund Authorities Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2003 (From [Vinod Vyasulu](#), CBPS, Bangalore)

http://education.vsnl.com/civic_bangalore/localfiscalresponsibility.html

Act to provide for the responsibility of Local Fund Authorities to ensure best practice of financial management of local funds.

From Alok Srivastava, Resource Person

Concept Note of the Jan Kerosene Pariyojana, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of India

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res06010602.pdf> (71 KB)

The note gives the details of the Jan Kerosene Pariyojana which intends to involve PRIs in the vigilance and monitoring of the distribution of kerosene through the PDS.

List of Blocks in the Jan Kerosene Pariyojana of Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of India

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res06010601.pdf> (487KB)

Provides the list of blocks, state and district-wise, where the new scheme Jan Kerosene Pariyojana has been taken up.

From Alok Srivastava, Resource Person and Happy Pant, Research Officer

Thai Manual on SRI

<http://ciifad.cornell.edu/sri/extmats/engthaiman.pdf> (257 KB)

Introduction to the Thai language manual, based on "How to Help Rice Plants Grow Better and Produce More: Teach Yourself and Others" drafted by Norman Uphoff.

Madagascar Manual on SRI

<http://www.peopleandplanet.net/doc.php?id=2330>

The SRI method was evolved in Madagascar in the 1980s. In India, it was first tried out by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in 2001.

From Happy Pant, Research Officer

Performance Evaluation of Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Planning Commission, March 2005

http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/peoreport/peo/peo_tpbs.pdf (716 KB)

The evaluation-study finds that involvement of the PRIs in monitoring was effective only in a few States, and suggests better ways of ensuring food security for poor.

Civil Society Engagement and India's Public Distribution System: Lessons from the Rationing Kruti Samiti in Mumbai by Rob Jenkins, Birkbeck College, University of London and Anne Marie Goetz Institute of Development Studies University of Sussex, Paper presented at World Development Report Workshop, November 2002.

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2004/Resources/22489_jenkinsgoetzWDR.pdf (224 KB)

The paper examines the potential for civil society organizations representing poorer client groups to contribute to improved performance in India's PDS.

India's Public Distribution System. A National and International Perspective, R. Radhakrishna and K. Subbarao, World Bank - Discussion Paper Number 380, November 1997.

http://wdsbeta.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/1997/11/01/000009265_3971229180939/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf (8.2 MB)

This paper estimates the gains and costs of PDS, assesses the Indian government's recent moves towards a better targeted PDS, and considers various options for reform

Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)

<http://rural.nic.in/anual0203/chap-2.pdf> (272 KB)

With the objective of ensuring food security and gainful employment and in the process strengthening rural infrastructure, SGRY is executed with full involvement of PRIs.

Gram Panchayats as Retailers of PDS Commodities

<http://www.expage.com/gacompass49/>

In Keonjhar district, Orissa, supply of PDS commodities is administered by panchayats, earlier the private retailers mismanaged the distribution of commodities.

Gram Panchayats empowered to monitor public distribution-

<http://www.hindu.com/2005/08/14/stories/2005081406840300.htm>

Through an Order issued by Karnataka Government in 2005, Gram panchayats have powers to supervise and maintain PDS in villages coming under them.

PDS under Gram Panchayats

<http://www.hindu.com/2005/06/13/stories/2005061301500300.htm>

The public distribution system (PDS) in villages comes under the purview of gram panchayats in districts of Karnataka.

Recommended Books

Energizing Rural Development through 'Panchayats', Editor Bibek Debroy & PD Kaushik, Published by Academic Foundation in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, 2005.

Details of Contributions to this Volume available at:

http://www.academicfoundation.com/n_detail/panchayats.asp

The ten papers in this book present a menu of options on what PRIs can do to address rural development concerns-including food security concerns.

Food Security and Panchayati Raj/edited by Pradeep Chaturvedi, 1997

Contents of the book featured at

<https://www.vedamsbooks.com/no11950.htm>

This book is available from: Vedams eBooks (P) Ltd. Vardhaman Charve Plaza IV Building # 9, K.P Block, Pitampura, New Delhi 110 034

The book is a compilation of papers by different authors on food security and role of PRIs including case studies from various states.

Recommended Organizations

Deccan Development Society (from [A.Kalamani](#), Panchayati Raj Programme, Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad)

<http://www.ddsindia.com/www/default.asp>

An integrated watershed community management programme that includes enhancing food security by promoting local food production, food storage and local distribution.

Recommended Website

System of Rice Intensification (SRI)- new method of cultivation (from Alok Srivastava, Resource Person)

<http://www.wfsnews.org/theme3.php>

SRI is a eco-friendly method of cultivation and its high yields can help the community overcome food insecurity.

Responses in Full

A. Bandyopadhyay, ICAR, New Delhi

Response 1

It is true that PRI is the closest to the people and they should be the key element in people oriented programmes. But a very significant aspect has always to be kept in mind that even if we assume total integrity of the PRIs (difficult?), political colour becomes a great impediment in equitable sharing of benefits. In addition, there are examples in the states where PRIs are highly empowered that Poverty Alleviation programmes do not necessarily work well.

Nira Ramachandran , Consultant UNICEF,New Delhi

Response 1

An innovative approach to ensuring food security through Panchayati Raj Institutions, which may interest everyone is the (World Food Programme-MS Swaminathan Research Foundation) WFP-MSSRF "Food for Social Work" initiative.

The idea behind the concept is to allow people the dignity of earning their food, rather than being dependent on handouts. To distinguish the scheme from the regular Food for Work programme, the works selected include assisting the Anganwadi worker, helping to prepare/serve mid-day meals, establishing village woodlots for fuel, maintaining cleanliness and sanitation in the village, conducting home visits to new mothers the old and infirm, escorting girls and small children to distant schools or the Anganwadi centre, helping in the PHC, etc. The advantages of the scheme are that the beneficiaries could include the elderly, pregnant women and others who are not fit for heavy manual labour, the activities would be located in or around the village, the activities would be year-round, not restricted to the dry season, which reduces access to income in the period of greatest food insecurity (the monsoons), and every village could develop a team of semi-trained workers. Payment could be in foodgrain or in a mix of cash and foodgrain to ensure sufficient food for a family to survive.

The Panchayat would of course, play a major role in identifying the beneficiaries and deciding on the works/activities most needed in their own village. Details are available in the Report on the Workshop on "Food for Social Work", WFP 2003.

Ranjit Kr. Maiti, P&RD Dept, Govt. of West Bengal, Kolkata

The Constitution has empowered the PRIs to act as the third tier of the Government and they are to plan and implement schemes and programmes for the economic development and social justice of the local area. Hence PRIs can not be ignored in respect of any type of schemes to be implemented at rural areas. Empowerment does not come straight away from heaven. It must be earned and the process is a continuous one. The states which empowered the PRIs through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and the State Acts had to follow a path which may be summarized as below:

Welfare> Access> Participation> Control> Empowerment

Thus the PRIs have to pass through the process to be empowered in the democratic set up. Government machinery so far could not reach the poorest people but it is possible for the PRIs at the grass root to ameliorate the sufferings of the deserved categories of the people.

Yes, there are lacunae in the planning and implementation of schemes at the level of PRIs but for that reason PRIs per se can not be blamed. Rather we should blame ourselves as we in the Government machinery could not train them up adequately to meet the new challenges. Again the factor of politically

guided PRIs appear to have a tendency of partisan views but as a matter of fact this also has its limitations as the political parties concerned have got their stake in the next election. Now it is found that the situation is being changed to a great extent considering more and more participation of the people demanded through the acts and rules.

Now it is a question of propriety at the level of public servant, people's representatives at all levels and also the political parties to rise to the occasion as to how much power is to be given to the PRIs as required under the 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India. Even today after about 13 years of the 74th Amendment, a few states could come forward to devolve function, functionaries and finance to the three tiers of the PRIs.

All these aspects may be looked into before passing a very cryptic remark on the working of PRIs in India.

Subhash Mendhapurkar, SUTRA, Solan (HP)

Response 1

Moderator's Note: A summary of Shri Subhash Mendhapurkar's response to the query "Food Security through Panchayats, from Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection Department, Chennai" is given below. For the full response click [here](#).

The issue of empowerment of panchayats is crucial in implementation of social sector programmes. Two examples – one from Himachal Pradesh, where the Pradhans had been given powers to check the attendance in primary schools, and another from Rajasthan, where the panchayats were given powers to authorize salary payments to the MPWs after getting a 'satisfactory report' – have been cited to show that the path to empowerment of panchayats is not very easy and fraught with operational and practical problems.

Shri Mendhapurkar, therefore, says that an enabling environment is first required to make Gram Panchayat a democratic Body, and secondly the enabling environment (through law and rules and attitudes) for the Ward members to exercise their rights after empowerment.

A.Kalamani, Panchayati Raj Programme, Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad

The Public Distribution System (PDS) in India - a four decade old initiative - is highly centralized and is fuelled by only two cereals, rice and wheat. This has destabilized dryland agriculture. The availability of cheap rice has created major shift in the diets of the poor and degraded lands in the dryland regions further. Visible nutritional imbalance has been created with increasing non-dependence of dryland farmers on their own agricultural lands. Nutritive value crops like maize, sorghum, finger millet, coarse grains and uncultivated greens etc. which were providing 50% of nutrition in their diets are no longer cultivated. The major impact of the mainstream PDS is the major chunk of lands owned by the dalit and marginalized has been left fallow and continuous fallowisation has devastated the landscapes along the dry belt areas in India jeopardizing the ecological security of dry lands and food security. In this context, focus on dryland and sustainable agriculture practices as means of livelihood and food security needs to be initiated. The food security should be ensured with sustainable management of land, soil, livestock and diversified cropping systems based on the principles of conservation and using indigenous knowledge system.

The panchayats could achieve a lot in ensuring livelihood and food security through promotion of dryland agriculture and sustainable practices. There are experiments by Deccan Development Society and Centre for World Solidarity in Medak district of AP in this regard. The programme is called Alternate Public Distribution System focusing on local production, local procurement, local storage and local distribution of food grains to the poor. Under this programme the fallow lands have been identified, developed and brought under cultivation. The traditional diversity based cropping systems aiming food and fodder security using locally viable organic methods of cultivation were promoted through community action especially women. The millets and grains produced were stored at the community level and distributed to poor families at subsidized price through a card system during the food scarcity season.

The panchayats could play a lead role in initiating such experiments through promoting sustainable agricultural practices. In one of the villages in Khammam district, our efforts towards promoting non-chemical pest management have led to finally a Panchayat declaring the village as pesticide free village and passed a resolution in gram sabha accordingly. The panchayat is not allowing any pesticide dealer or seed companies to enter into the village and taking adequate measures to promote sustainable agriculture. The government of Andhra Pradesh came forward to replicate the model in about 200 villages.

We need a specific policy formulation in dryland agriculture at the state and at national levels where the perspective of intensive external input agriculture is discarded and a new lens is used to ensure livelihood and food security.

Subhash Mendhapurkar, SUTRA, Solan (HP)

Response 2

The information given by Nira Ramachandran about MS Swaminathan Research Foundation's food for social work sounds interesting. I am trying to locate the report on the WFP website, but have been unsuccessful. I would appreciate if some member could help me obtain the report or suggest some specific source for acquiring the report?

Nira Ramachandran , Consultant UNICEF,New Delhi

Response 2

I have located a copy of the Proposed Project Design for the "Food for Social Work" programme (I had coordinated the Workshop on "Food for Social Work"), which I am forwarding with this mail (see the [document](#)). Hope something on these lines can be initiated. For your information, the WFP did try out a few of the initiatives focusing on primary education for girls.

B.L.Kaul, Society for Popularization of Science, Jammu

Response 1

I confirm the change of food habits and greater dependence on rice in Rainfed areas of Jammu and Kashmir. EASY AVAILABILITY OF RICE HAS MADE PEOPLE LAZY AND SUBSTITUTE MORE NUTRITIOUS MAIZE, MILLET AND SORGHUM WITH LESS NUTRITIOUS RICE. The result is large chunks of fallow lands and ecological devastation of rainfed areas. The trend needs to be changed. I feel a sense of gratitude to Kalamani for raising this vital issue and at my level I will try to persuade the authorities in J&K to look into this serious nutritional and ecological issue.

B.L.Kaul, Society for Popularization of Science, Jammu

Response 2

Mr. Rajaraman has raised a very valid point in our search for solution to hunger and malnutrition facing the country. Panchayati Raj is the only solution for a fair distribution of food in the BPL families. It is rather strange that the local leaders and politicians are not ready to empower PRIs fearing losing their grip on the vote bank. They need to realise that instead of losing their vote banks they will earn gratitude of the millions living below poverty line and gain in political terms. I suggest that FAO and Ministry of Food G.O.I should organize regional conferences of leaders and members of panchayati raj institutions to create a greater understanding of the issues involved. There is no alternative to decentralization and Panchayati Raj alone will ultimately solve our problem of food security.

A. Bandyopadhyay, ICAR, New Delhi

Response 2

Attributing laziness for shifting to eating rice is possibly a bit oversimplification and elitist. The phenomenon needs thorough scientific study and analysis for going into its socio-economic reasons. The study is needed in all states where the millets, minor millets and maize were the staple food. Very interesting reasons like social status, losing germplasm, cost of harvesting and post harvest processing are a few of many determinants of the phenomenon.

Alok Srivastava, UNDP, New Delhi

Mr. Rajaraman has raised the issue of identification of hunger and malnutrition among the constituents of Gram Sabha. I think this is a function that the Gram Sabhas/ Panchayats can carry out with some enabling instructions and empowerment. We would need their effective empowerment and integration in the PDS by the state governments. The Food and Consumer Affairs Department of the states will have to start working very closely with the PRIs in monitoring the lifting and distribution of the essential items. Of course, the opening up of the PDS to PRIs may not be welcomed at many places, but this issue will have to be dealt with.

PRIs can be effectively involved in monitoring and vigilance of the PDS. This can extend to foodgrains distribution as well. I would like to bring to the notice of members the Jan Kerosene Pariyojana of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. It sees to establish a system where diversion of PDS supplied kerosene to the black market and misuse through adulteration is minimized. The scheme envisages involving the panchayats to bring in a measure of transparency and public accountability. A pilot has been launched in 485 blocks across various states. Under this scheme the PRIs at all levels i.e. village level, block level and district levels have been given the responsibility of monitoring the scheme.

The important features of this scheme, wherein the involvement of PRIs has been brought in, are:

- The barrels and the distributing trucks have been specially painted in blue colour with a distinctive log, bearing the slogan Jan Kerosene Pariyojana. At the village, block and district level, Vigilance Committees have been formed. The committees consist of elected representatives of the village, block and district panchayats and necessarily include women members.
- Instructions have been given that the Fair Price Shop dealer and wholesale dealer must inform the concerned Vigilance Committee members about the lifting of kerosene and arrival of the same in the

village. It will be the duty of the FPS dealer to inform the Vigilance Committee members about the arrival of kerosene in the village and its unloading. The unloading has to be done in the presence of Vigilance Committee members, which includes breaking of seal.

- Redressal of complaints at all levels has been entrusted to these committees. These committees also have the powers to enquire into allegations of malpractices and adulteration etc. The Vigilance Committees can enquire into complaints and send recommendations to the licensing authorities after getting approvals from Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas.
- The FPS dealer has to obtain a certificate from the Vigilance Committee about the distribution and quality of distribution. The dealer will be allowed to lift stocks for the next month after satisfying this condition.

The State Level Coordinators for the scheme (see [scheme](#)) and the blocks where it has been taken up are now available (see [list of blocks](#)).

The pilot has been launched for six months, and the NCAER will do an independent impact study after its implementation.

Gopi Ghosh, FAO, New Delhi

Food security is impacted by a series of complex and inter-related factors having several economic, social and institutional linkages, and critical issues bearing on access and entitlement to natural, financial and social resources, quality of natural resources, livelihoods opportunities, provisioning of public services and their efficacy, deployment of public funds and their manner of allocation, utilization and monitoring - as governed by existing policy parameters (through various employment and food schemes) and, not the least, global influences such as the WTO. The instruments of national planning and prioritization, the acts of implementation, monitoring and importantly governance, are critical in effectively addressing food insecurity and hunger. The Jan Kerosene Pariyojana put up by Alok Srivastava so evidently demonstrates the cardinal role played by the PRI in ensuring its implementation in the desired manner. If similar monitoring systems are put forward for the PDS, and other schemes, I think it would have a salutary impact on the food security scenario of the nation.

Having said that let me briefly point out some of the possible areas of intervention for the PRI to make people more food secure. Whatever it takes, PRI should tend to augment agricultural production - as it not only supplies food locally - it also provides livelihoods to the majority. And it means right from ensuring provisioning of good quality inputs (seed, fertilizer, credit etc in a collective way) to efficient and equitable management of natural resources like water, forests, fishing bodies; from creating and managing rural infrastructure to acting as pressure groups for bringing in favorable reform in farm policy.

PRIs could be the most effective monitors for the PDS and a host of Govt schemes that are often criticized for mal-implementation, mis-targetting, wastage and corruption. Education and awareness about environment, nutrition, health, and, importantly, about people's Entitlements and Rights by or through the PRIs may usher in much improved results. PRI should be also be the sole medium for efficient distribution of relief work in times of distress and natural calamities, when the needs are escalated as also the chaos.

Mahtab Bamji, Dangoria Charitable Trust, Hyderabad

In some Telangana areas of Andhra Pradesh there has been a marked shift from millets to rice. This has been partly attributed to the Rs 2/Kg subsidised rice scheme. Among other factors rice is easy to cook, prestigious to eat and provides price stability (I am told). AP government's directive to farmers not to grow rice in rabbi season has met with lot of resistance and hence now the government is urging farmers

to at least adopt the SRI method of cultivation where water and seed requirement is greatly reduced. Yields are higher if management is proper. A combination of advocacy and education about SRI method of cultivation and nutrition education to ensure that polishing is minimised and excess water after cooking (ganji) is not discarded, would contribute to nutrition and environment security. Also effort to promote millets with proper technical inputs and support systems should be intensified.

A Bandyopadhyay, ICAR, New Delhi

Response 3

It is true that the PRIs will be the best for interventions for making people more food secure. But one question which nags me is how do we overcome the ground reality of political bias in the PRIs and the known existence of leakages and corruption even in those institutions. These questions are not to negate the importance of the PRIs but to make people think to be on guard about these shortcomings while accepting that the PRIs are the best to deliver services to the needy in the village. Could somebody in the Community give a thought to this question please?

Manju Agrawal, Amity Institute of Behavioral & Allied Sciences, Amity University, Lucknow

There is no doubt that PRIs provide solutions to a lot of delivery related problems in the rural sector but the problem of governance is there. The system will never let PRIs or community become empowered. We need the political will for it which is missing due to vested interests.

Vinod Vyasulu, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore

Response 1

Dr Bandyopadhyay has raised an important issue. However, we know that PRIs--and municipalities for that matter--have no accounting system. All that exists is a cash book--and so it is not difficult for corrupt elements to flourish. Why not work towards a system of accounting in all such bodies? Karnataka has passed a Local Bodies Fiscal Responsibility Act that makes such accounting--and more--a legal requirement, but implementation as usual is, to put it kindly, slow. Until such systemic improvements are made, these problems will persist.

Ranjit K. Maiti, Joint Secretary, P&RD Dept., Govt. of West Bengal, Kolkata

It is not a fact that PRIs are not guided by any Act and Rules for its financial matters. In West Bengal there are one Accounts Rules for the Gram Panchayat and another for the upper two tiers. Even on the basis of such Rules Accounts softwares have been developed. 128 Gram Panchayats are using Gram Panchayat Management System software and Integrated Fund Monitoring and Accounting System software in 14 Zilla Parishads and 57 Panchayat Samitis as in December 2006.

The people's representatives are coming forward for replication of these soft wares for ensuring transparency and accountability at their levels.

Vinod Vyasulu, CBPS, Bangalore

Response 2

I am giving below the Karnataka Local Fund Fiscal Responsibility Act (see [Full Act](#)) as it may be of interest to members.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community in India at se-decn@solutionexchange-un.net.in and the Food Security and Nutrition Community in India at se-food@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject reading '[se-decn][se-food] Query: Food Security through Panchayats, from Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection Department, Chennai (Advice; Comparative Experiences). Additional Reply'

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