

# **EVALUATION REPORT ON REVAMPED PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**

## **1. The Study**

The scheme of Public Distribution System (PDS) played a significant role in distribution of essential commodities to the vulnerable sections of the people during the last four decades. However, it was experienced that its benefits had not been flowing to certain vulnerable sections of the population due to their disadvantageous geographical location, lower purchasing power, and lack of communication etc. Therefore, to ensure that the public distribution system reaches out to the remotest corner of the country, the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was introduced by the Prime Minister on January 1, 1992.

At the instance of Planning Commission, the Programme Evaluation Organisation undertook the study to assess the availability of commodities at the Fair Price Shops and the accessibility of the people to these commodities.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the study were the following:

- i) to understand the administration of the scheme,
- ii) to ascertain the coverage under the scheme in terms of number of Blocks identified, new fair price shops opened, additional ration cards issued, and infrastructural facilities created for delivery of commodities including those at doorsteps,
- iii) to study the availability of commodities both essential and additional supplied under RPDS,
- iv) to examine the accessibility of the people to the essential and additional commodities available under RPDS,
- v) to assess the people's own perception of needs and preference for commodities not being distributed under RPDS,

- vi) to comprehend the views and reactions of officials and non-officials not directly connected with the administration and operation of RPDS, and
- vii) to find out the linkages of the scheme, if any with those of JRY and Nutrition Programme.

### **3. Sample Size/Criteria for Sample Selection**

Thirty two (about 2%) of 1580 Blocks identified under RPDS from 15 States were selected for the study by Simple Random Sampling technique, leaving the District headquarters Block. From each selected block, two villages were selected randomly. Thus, 64 villages were selected for the study. Further 1097 households were selected. In addition to 193 officials, 190 non-officials and 24 MLAs/MPs were selected for the study.

### **4. Reference Period**

The reference period of the study was from June, 1992 to March, 1994.

### **5. Main Findings**

1. It was observed that the Administrative set-up at State, District and Block levels were mostly adequate. The functional linkages and arrangements for implementing the RPDS Programme were reported to be efficient.
2. The doorsteps delivery was not in operation in any of the FPS in the selected Blocks falling in Bihar, Kerala, Orissa and West Bengal. It was partially started in the selected blocks of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.
3. Out of the 64 selected villages, ration cards were not provided to all the selected households in 30 villages.
4. The vans used for doorsteps delivery and Mobile Fair Price Shops were found to be inadequate. About 20 percent vans were not in working condition and required major repair. Vans were also not allocated Block-wise.
5. Vigilance committees were not constituted at state level. However, vigilance committees were constituted at district level in selected States except Assam, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. It was reported that most of the Committees were not functioning effectively for the purpose intended to.

6. During the period of study a downward trend in the 2nd year and marginal increase in the 3rd year was observed for all the commodities in all the States. Allotment of commodities did not show any uniformity of proportion to the actual requirement of the states or the food habits of the population.
7. The information related to allotment, lifting and distribution of wheat, rice and sugar at Block level showed satisfactory lifting and distribution of commodities in most of the States. However, there were lot of information gaps for all the commodities on these issues, during the 1st year of the RPDS scheme, 1992-93, and 1993-94.
8. The norms prescribed were generally followed for distribution of all the commodities. However, there were variations in some states.
9. The problem faced by F.P.S. dealers were due to godown/storage facility, transport and financial matters which affected the availability of commodities.
10. Some of the Fair Price Shops were opening regularly as per working hours schedule. However, most of the fair price shops were irregular in opening and did not adhere to norms of working hours.
11. It was observed that commodities were generally distributed regularly but in some cases it was difficult to draw full ration by the beneficiaries due to irregularity in distribution.
12. The quality of commodities distributed through RPDS were generally average for wheat, rice and sugar. However, 89 per cent of respondents reported the quality of kerosene oil as good.
13. In most of the states the commodities were not being distributed according to local needs and preferences of commodities under RPDS.
14. It was reported by the knowledgeable persons that the functioning of scheme was unsatisfactory due to irregularity in distribution of foodgrains, high transport cost, inadequate subsidy, under-weight supply, bad quality, etc.
15. About 93 per cent of the knowledgeable persons reported non-availability of new commodities like edible oil, janta cloth, soap and detergent under RPDS programme.

## **6. Major Suggestions**

1. The places suitable for coverage under the scheme should be included under RPDS programme. In addition to this, the issue of ration cards should be dealt seriously by eliminating bogus ration cards.
2. FCI should consider for smaller godowns facilities conveniently located near the fair price shops run under RPDS scheme connected with the main FCI godowns to enable the commodities stored, lifted and distributed easily and timely at regular intervals.
3. There is also need to improve the door-steps delivery through mobile fair price shops. The vans should be made available for this purpose.
4. The vigilance committees should be constituted at all levels in order to operationalise the RPDS effectively.
5. The distribution network of fair price shops needs to be strengthened.
6. Some innovative approaches are required for tackling the issue of unaffordability of the prices of essential commodities distributed through RPDS scheme.
7. Regular checking is needed to monitor the working hours of fair price shops, the quality, quantity as well as price of the commodities.
8. The essential and additional items of the commodities under the scheme should be identified and taken up for distribution according to local situation, needs and preferences.