

**A QUICK EVALUATION STUDY OF FOOD FOR WORK
PROGRAMME - AN INTERIM REPORT - 1979**

1. The Study

Drawing on contemporary international experience and taking stock of the depredations of poverty prevalent in India, the Government of India launched the 'Food for Work Programme' (FWP) in April 1977 to supplement the various similar programmes which had already been in operation. The FWP aimed at eradication of hunger and unemployment, creation of durable community assets, strengthening of the rural infrastructure and utilisation of surplus foodgrains for the development of human resources. Due to the various built in constraints in the Scheme in its original form, the programme could not make much headway initially. The Scheme was, therefore, modified subsequently to include both plan and non-plan works, provided, they resulted in the creation of durable community assets. The revised scheme included a wide spectrum of activities like maintenance of public works, construction of irrigation projects, flood protection and drainage works, soil and water conservation, land reclamation projects, afforestation, rural roads, drinking water supply schemes etc. The revised scheme provided that foodgrains were to be made available to the State Governments and Union Territories free of cost to supplement their budgetary provisions for the scheme, that these foodgrains were to be used for payments of wages under the schemes, that the works under the scheme could be implemented throughout the year, that the State Governments and UTs could entrust the work to voluntary organisations at their discretion, etc.

At the instance of the Planning Commission, the Programme Evaluation Organisation undertook a quick evaluation survey of the Programme in September, 1979 and brought out its Interim Report in December, 1979.

2. Objectives

The study was organised to probe into the extent to which the objectives of the Programme had been achieved with particular reference to;

- i) The extent to which additional gainful employment was generated in the rural areas;

- ii) The changes in the income level of the beneficiaries;
- iii) The contribution of the programme in creating durable community assets and providing infrastructure for rural development;
- iv) Its impact on farm prices and agricultural wages;
- v) Its impact on the consumption level and nutritional intake of the beneficiaries; and
- vi) Its efficacy in bringing about social changes in village community in terms of meeting social obligations, social mobility, etc.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Selection of Sample

The study covered 10 States viz. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West-Bengal. In each selected state, 2 districts (one with good performance and another with average performance in terms of distribution of foodgrains) preferably in two different regions of the State were taken for the Study. In each chosen district, two blocks were selected in line with the utilization of the foodgrains supplied. From each selected block, two villages in which the Programme was in operation were selected. 10 respondents were randomly selected from each selected village. Thus the sample consisted of 10 states, 20 districts, 40 blocks, 80 villages and 793 beneficiaries.

4. Reference Period

The field work was conducted in the months of September and October 1979. Data were collected for the years 1977-78, 1978-79 and 1979-80.

5. Main Findings

1. From different decompositions of the beneficiaries of the Programme, it was found that 50.6 per cent were agricultural labourers, 22.4 per cent cultivators, 19.7 per cent non-agricultural labourers and 7.3 per cent others. Of the total beneficiaries, 42%, 13% and 45% were SCs, STs and others respectively. The proportion of males and females was 80 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.

2. The planning and implementation of the Programme had a diverse structure across states and districts. All the States formed Steering Committees, some of which were ill functioning. Steering Committees were reported to be formed in some districts also. Only 5 out of the 20 selected districts adopted the method of registration of labourers for employment. No financial limits were fixed in most of the states in undertaking the various works. However, there was the system of financial sanction from higher levels, which the Panchayats tried to evade by hook or crook.

3. Some districts reported an array of problems like lack of co-ordination between different departments, non-availability of timely supply of foodgrains from the FCI, non-cooperation of local people, lack of essential implements etc.

4. There were wide variations across the chosen districts and villages in the quantum of foodgrains released and in the additional employment and income generated during 1978-79. The extent of additional employment generated over the last year ranged from 0.7 per cent to 76.1 per cent. The extent of additional income generated over the last year ranged from 1.4 per cent to 97 per cent.

5. There were considerable malpractices and difficulties like deficiency of storage facilities, open market selling of foodgrains by the contractors, less payments of wages, utilisation of foodgrains for purchase of crockery and furniture, etc. and delay in the supply of foodgrains.

6. The Programme exercised a stabilising effect on foodgrain prices in 8 districts and depressing effect on them in 6 districts. A positive impact was noticed on the life & living conditions of the village community in terms of employment and income. The Programme exercised no significant impact on wages in 13 districts. However, a positive impact was noticed on wages in 7 districts.

6. **Main Suggestions**

1. The empty gunny bags retained by the distributing agencies should be handed over to the village Panchayats for augmenting their resources.

2. Efforts should be made to provide those foodgrains preferred by the beneficiaries.

3. In line with the preference of the beneficiaries, provision for payment of wages, partly in cash and partly in kind and on weekly basis, may be made.

4. Enhanced supervision by the centre may be effected to avoid the creation of non-durable assets.

5. Further studies and evaluation on the benefits conferred by the Programme on the rural population may be conducted.