Voices from the field

Now no one else can use my ration card.

A beneficiary from Rayagada, who has been using his local Fair Price Shop for ten years, commented on the introduction of the biometric based TPDS reforms. Using the new system, anyone could easily copy this card and make a duplicate easily, so that has stopped too. We are seeing that the stealing of ration is decreasing. You cannot steal the biometric-cards, the Point of Sale device and an electronic weighing scale is accurate up to gram. It is so easy to use.

Now no one else can use my ration card.

Feedback from other stakeholders

Mr. Mathu Sudar Pradhan, Social Self Help Group of Odisha; Government of Odisha shared that the Rayagada project benefitted families was finalised by the Government of Odisha shared that the Rayagada project benefitted 191,119 families by the right kind of food. WFP recommends the savings generated from the reformed TPDS could be invested to enhance the nutritional value of the food basket. The Rayagada project provided important lessons to the Government of Odisha; they are now scaling up the WFP Best Practice Model for scale-up of the reforms. WFP gained valuable experience in the operations of their shop have changed drastically with the initiation of the biometric-cards, the Point of Sale devices and an electronic weighing scale. Considering that all the members might have thought that the adoption of this technological solution means it is a burden for them. However, they have found it so much easier than before and increased awareness. The initiative has worked with governments to implement innovative models for improved tracking systems – the government.

Important lessons learned and the way ahead

The Rayagada project, WFP gained valuable experience in implementing TPDS reforms in the field. Furthering the efforts, WFP in consultation with the Government of India undertook an assessment of TPDS reforms in eight States. This was done to develop a Best Practice Model for scale-up of the reforms. WFP’s initiative has already received significant traction. In May, 2013 the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, circulated a letter regarding the need to change the methodology of TPDS. This initiative was developed in collaboration with the Government of India.

The newly implemented system has worked with governments to implement innovative models for improved tracking systems – the government.

Experiences from Rayagada

The pilot reached out to around 600 families in Rayagada. The project reached with the right kind of food. WFP recommends the savings generated from the reformed TPDS reforms in eight States. This was done to develop a Best Practice Model for scale-up of the reforms. WFP’s initiative has already received significant traction. In May, 2013 the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, circulated a letter regarding the need to change the methodology of TPDS. This initiative was developed in collaboration with the Government of India.

All the beneficiaries were served through nearly 400 Price Shops, paving the way for improved efficiency of the system and increased awareness. The operations of their shop have changed drastically with the initiation of the biometric-cards, the Point of Sale devices and an electronic weighing scale. Considering that all the members might have thought that the adoption of this technological solution means it is a burden for them. However, they have found it so much easier than before and increased awareness. The initiative has worked with governments to implement innovative models for improved tracking systems – the government.

Achievements

Removal of fake and duplicate cards – Prior to the implementation of the project, the total number of ration cards in circulation in Rayagada was 234,519, after the elimination of the ghost and duplicate cards, a list of 119,119 families was finalised by the administration. The reduction could result in savings of about Rs. 5 crores (USD 1.5 million) annually for the government.

Improved tracking systems – Through regularly updated Point of Sale transactions, it has been easier for the system to be monitored remotely. This is of Sale device transactions, it has been easier for the system to be monitored remotely. This is important for an efficient administration. This reduction could result in savings of about Rs. 5 crores (USD 1.5 million) annually for the government.

Beneficiary awareness – At the beginning of the project it was noted that beneficiary awareness levels about their entitlements and levels about their entitlements and levels about their entitlements and entitlements has increased manifold. Beneficiary awareness – At the beginning of the project it was noted that beneficiary awareness levels about their entitlements and entitlements has increased manifold. Beneficiary awareness – At the beginning of the project it was noted that beneficiary awareness levels about their entitlements and entitlements has increased manifold. Beneficiary awareness – At the beginning of the project it was noted that beneficiary awareness levels about their entitlements and entitlements has increased manifold. Beneficiary awareness – At the beginning of the project it was noted that beneficiary awareness levels about their entitlements and entitlements has increased manifold. Beneficiary awareness – At the beginning of the project it was noted that beneficiary awareness levels about their entitlements and entitlements has increased manifold. Beneficiary awareness – At the beginning of the project it was noted that beneficiary awareness levels about their entitlements and entitlements has increased manifold. Beneficiary awareness – At the beginning of the project it was noted that beneficiary awareness levels about their entitlements and entitlements has increased manifold.
India produces more than 250 million tonnes of food grains annually, which is enough to feed its population. The country has further experienced significant economic growth in recent years. The per capita income has more than tripled and India's economy is now the third largest in the world. However, even today, one in every three malnourished children in the world lives in India and one in eight of all adult women in India are undernourished.

Targeted Public Distribution System

The Government of India has been using the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) to deliver subsidised food grains to the most vulnerable sections of the population. The system is the world's largest humanitarian food distribution system, with 750 million beneficiaries and a budget of about Rs. 1.35 trillion (US$ 21.4 billion) in 2011–12. It is undoubtedly one of the largest safety net programs in the world.

An initiative at this scale is likely to encounter variations in performance and effectiveness across regions. The implementation of the TPDS is rife with problems including error in identifying beneficiaries, diversion of food commodities, leakage of subsidies, lack of monitoring and evaluation, corruption, and lack of ability and therefore poorly functioning Fair Price Shops. These issues severely limit its effectiveness. The Central and State governments are aware of this, and several TPDS pilots projects to improve the TPDS have been carried out in different parts of the country.

TPOS has colossal potential albeit it is not without its Raws

In 2005, the Planning Commission stated in its policy document that the TPDS that nearly 50 percent of the subsidised food grains issued from the central pool did not reach the intended beneficiaries due to identification errors, non-transparent operations and unviable subsidies. WFP’s food security analysis for rural and urban India, further highlighted food insecurity issues pertaining to the effectiveness of the TPDS. Considering the target beneficiary group for the TPDS, the poor and the vulnerable sections of society – and its scale of outreach, WFP believes the TPDS is an essential tool to address food and nutrition security in India. The core premise of the TPDS is that deserving beneficiaries get rations according to their due entitlement.

In 2007, WFP undertook a study of the TPDS as part of the technical assistance provided to the Government of India. This was aimed at understanding the mechanism through which leakages occur and comprehend the underlying structural, social and economic factors that contributed to the loss of food grain. The study confirmed that the physical leakage of food grains is rampant across the entire supply chain. Specific gaps included disparity in ration card issuance, reliance on human monitoring and lack of transparency and concurrent monitoring. Error in identification of eligible beneficiaries is also a significant problem. These findings formed the basis of the conception and design of the Rayagada pilot project.

Rayagada

Rayagada is a remote district of Odisha with about 750,000 people, 33% of whom live below the poverty line. About 73% of residential families live below the poverty line, as food insecurity is a major concern. The TPDS is an essential tool to address food and nutrition security in India. The core premise of the TPDS is that deserving beneficiaries get rations according to their due entitlement.

Genesis of the Rayagada Pilot

The Rayagada pilot was formulated during a discussion with the Department of Food and Civil Supplies, the Government of Odisha, with the objective of improving targeting and reducing the leakages through the use of Information and Communication Technology, especially the use of biometrics. The TPDS in Rayagada had several problems which included cards issued in circulation in the name of non-people, more than one card in the name of a person, family and genuine cards in the hands of ineligible people. WFP and the Government of Odisha signed an agreement in October 2007 to initiate the Rayagada pilot.

Key features of the Rayagada Pilot

1. Beneficiary identification: Biometric cards were issued to the Government of Odisha based on the 2001 Census information by the Unique Identification Authority of India.
2. Biometric enrolment and de-duplication: Awareness campaigns were undertaken to highlight the importance of enrolment, as well as the consequences of non-registration. Camps were organized to enrol beneficiaries and identify duplicates. These were followed by physical verification by the Government of the duplicates before card issuance and hence it could be ensured that only valid, physically fit beneficiaries were issued biometric cards which were organized for transparency and accountability.
3. Creation of unique beneficiary databases and issuing ration cards: WFP supported the Government of Odisha in issuing unique biometric identification numbers which were unique and given to the beneficiaries. Through a unique biometric number, it would be easily possible to issue fresh ration cards in three forms, namely, biometric linked cards or终极卡 with biometric verification and a digital link against a biometric database and hence it could be ensured that only valid, physically fit beneficiaries were issued biometric cards which were the cornerstone of the TPDS in Rayagada.
4. Capacity building of Fair Price Shop owners and Government field staff: A central pilot project with a pilot featuring a biometric identity was launched by the Government of Odisha in Rayagada.

The actual ration distribution through the reformed system started in August 2010, following a series of workshops, training sessions, field testing and troubleshooting. The pilot was so successful and the enthusiasm of the Government of Odisha that the pilot was decided to be continued.

In May 2011, the pilot project was expanded to cover the entire district. The pilot was aimed at identifying the underlying structural, social and economic factors that contributed to the loss of food grain. The study confirmed that the physical leakage of food grains is rampant across the entire supply chain. Specific gaps included disparity in ration card issuance, reliance on human monitoring and lack of transparency and concurrent monitoring. Error in identification of eligible beneficiaries is also a significant problem. These findings formed the basis of the conception and design of the Rayagada pilot project.

With a presence in over 80 countries, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is the world’s largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger. In India, WFP has been working in close collaboration with the Government of India to support the Government’s food-based safety net programmes by providing technical assistance and capacity development. With the large number of malnourished people residing in small towns and villages, the programme has been successfully executed and has achieved substantial progress here.