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### Public Food Delivery System in Urban Tamil Nadu

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#### Abstract:

Food insecurity in urban areas is a resultant process of urbanization, itself and it leaves a strong imprint on the lives of urban poor as they are more vulnerable to market volatility. Public Food Delivery System (PFDS) acts as a catalyst in strengthening food security among urban population. Tamil Nadu being the third most urbanized state in the country, a study on the states food delivery systems is much warranted. In this set-up, the paper makes an attempt to study the performance of PFDS in the state with the help of available secondary data on three important programmes namely Public Distribution System (PDS), Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). The paper exclusively examines National Sample Survey data on urban beneficiary household of rice and wheat from PDS across different consumption expenditure classes. The study also examines percentage of urban household (with at least one member) benefiting from MDMS and ICDS across different social groups as well as among different consumption expenditure classes. At the outset, the variables under study look into the dependency of households on PFDS in the context of urbanization. The present study found out that consumption of rice from PDS is highest in bottom 30% of the Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) classes and on the other hand utilization of wheat is more among 40% of the MPCE classes in the state of Tamil Nadu. As far as MDMS is concerned, highest numbers of households belonging to SC/STs are using the scheme. And, if the same delivery system is examined for different MPCE classes, it can be observed that beneficiary households are highest in bottom 30% category of the urban areas. In ICDS, urban beneficiary household is higher among OBCs of the state. Creating awareness among the non-responding bottom deciles of the MPCE classes and excluding non-responding top deciles of the MPCE classes from the service area are some of the measures to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of PFDS in urban Tamil Nadu.

**Keywords:** urbanization, consumption, households, social groups

## 1. Introduction

Food security encompasses three important factors namely availability, accessibility and affordability of food (MSSRF 2004). Lag in any one of those factors result in food insecurity. Apart from food and nutrition security, absorption of food is another major issue faced by urban poor which is impaired by poor sanitation and drinking water facilities. In urban areas, food insecurity arises due to urbanization, itself and it leaves a strong imprint on the lives of urban poor as they are more vulnerable to market volatilities. There are number of studies on the effects of food insecurity and in particular on the relationship between food insecurity and poor health status (Cook and Frank 2008; Hampton 2007). However, it has to be understood in the right context that neither food production nor the ability to buy can guarantee food security unless there is effective distributive mechanism (Narayanan 2015). To overcome this deficiency, Public Food Delivery System (PFDS) can be adopted as a medium in strengthening food security among urban population. In the last two decades, the rate of urbanization in India and particularly in Tamil Nadu has been rapid. According to the 1991 Census, only 34.15% of the total population in Tamil Nadu was classified as urban but in 2011, it has risen to 48.45%, an increase of 14.3% (Census 2011) which makes it the third most urbanized state in the country. Hence, an examination of PFDS especially in the backdrop of urban population has been attempted here for the state of Tamil Nadu.

In this set-up, the paper makes an attempt to study the performance of PFDS in the state with the help of available secondary data on three important programmes namely Public Distribution System (PDS), Mid-Day Meal

Scheme (MDMS) and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). The paper examines the available National Sample Survey data (NSSO 2007) on urban beneficiary household of rice and wheat from PDS across different consumption expenditure classes for the reference period 2004-05. The study also examines percentage of urban household (with at least one member) benefiting from MDMS and ICDS across different social groups as well as among different consumption expenditure classes. At the outset, the variables under study look into the dependency of households on PFDS in the context of urbanization.

## 2. Public Distribution System

Public Distribution System (PDS) which was launched as general entitlement scheme in 1940s was revamped in 1997 as Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). Later in 2013, National Food Security Act gave necessary legal cover up for TPDS. Even though the region under study, Tamil Nadu follows universal PDS, the state government issues Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) Scheme Cards for the poorest of the poor families. Rice is the staple food for the people of Tamil Nadu and with the changing food habits of urban population; it becomes imperative to study about the consumption of both rice and wheat of urban households not only from PDS but also towards their total consumption across different consumption expenditure classes. Table - 1 and 2, respectively, presents the percentage of urban households reporting consumption of rice from PDS and percentage of PDS rice consumption to total rice consumption for the state as well as for the centre.

**Table – 1: Percentage of Urban Households Reporting Consumption of Rice from PDS**

State/Country	% of urban households reporting consumption of rice from PDS across different consumption expenditure classes (2004-05)			
	Bottom 30%	Middle 40%	Top 30%	All classes
Tamil Nadu	77.74	57.30	20.90	47.70
India	25.67	14.15	4.17	13.10

**Source:** NSSO 2007C

At all India level, about 26% of urban households in the bottom 30% of MPCE classes, 14% of urban households in the middle 40% of MPCE classes, 4% of urban households in the top 30% of MPCE classes and only 13% of all urban households were found to be utilizing PDS for consumption of rice. The percentage of households consuming rice from PDS among all the three MPCE classes individually as well as aggregately was much higher in Tamil Nadu than all India figures. This may probably due to the difference between regional and national food habits and to be more specific Tamil Nadu by no means is a wheat-consuming state (MSSRF 2010). In Tamil Nadu, the quantitative share of PDS rice consumption to total rice consumption in bottom 30%, middle 40% and top 30% of MPCE classes is 47.31%, 38.23% and 19.43% respectively which is higher than the national level. To an extent, this is perhaps due to better reach of PDS in the state particularly in terms of rice consumption among urban households.

**Table – 2: Importance of PDS Rice Consumption among Urban Households**

State/Country	% of PDS rice consumption to total rice consumption across different consumption expenditure classes (2004-05)			
	Bottom 30%	Middle 40%	Top 30%	All classes
Tamil Nadu	47.31	38.23	19.43	34.89
India	23.00	13.39	4.49	12.82

**Source:** NSSO 2007C

Table – 3 shows percentage of urban households reporting consumption of wheat from PDS across different MPCE classes. It is found from the table that percentage of urban households depending upon PDS for wheat is highest in the middle 40% of MPCE classes in the state as against the all India trend in which consumption of wheat is higher in the bottom 30% of MPCE classes. In aggregate, the state has better access to PDS in urban area for wheat. A comparison of Table – 1 and 3 indicate that dependency of urban household for rice (47.70%) is much higher than wheat (10.70%) in Tamil Nadu whereas at the nation level dependency rate for rice from PDS (13.10%) is also higher than wheat (5.80%). Across different MPCE classes, it is also found that urban households prefer more on PDS for rice than wheat in the country as a whole and the tendency of the state is no different from the nation. This is irrespective of the rate of increase in the consumption of wheat among urban Indians.

**Table – 3: Percentage of Urban Households Reporting Consumption of Wheat from PDS**

State/Country	% of urban households reporting consumption of wheat from PDS across different consumption expenditure classes (2004-05)			
	Bottom 30%	Middle 40%	Top 30%	All classes
Tamil Nadu	10.31	15.00	6.75	10.70
India	11.50	5.84	2.07	5.80

**Source:** NSSO 2007C

The share of PDS wheat in total wheat consumption for the state was 17.17% which is far better than the all India average (6.80%). Tamil Nadu reported less than 28% of the urban households in the bottom 30% of MPCE classes, around 24% in middle 40% of MPCE classes and almost 9% in top 30% of MPCE classes. On the other hand, at all India level there were around 14% of households in the 30% MPCE category and meager 6.75% and 2.42% of households for middle and top MPCE classes respectively (Table – 4).

**Table – 4: Importance of PDS Wheat Consumption among Urban Households**

State/Country	% of PDS wheat consumption to total wheat consumption across different consumption expenditure classes (2004-05)			
	Bottom 30%	Middle 40%	Top 30%	All classes
Tamil Nadu	27.63	23.51	8.98	17.17
India	13.95	6.75	2.42	6.80

**Source:** NSSO 2007C

### 3. Mid - Day Meal Scheme

In 1995, National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE) otherwise known as Mid - Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) was launched with the objective of achieving universalization of primary education by raising the nutrition level of children in classes I to VIII and inculcating

appropriate hygiene and sanitation practices (Mohanty 2014). Table – 5 shows percentage of urban households across different social groups with at least one member benefiting from MDMS for the reference period 2004-05. It is revealed from the table that at all India level, in urban areas, 9% of ST households, 11.8% of SC households, about 11% of OBC households make use of MDMS and in all it is found only 8% depend on MDMS. In Tamil Nadu, 22.1% ST and 24.2% SCs of vulnerable category benefited from MDMS. Overall, it is observed that accessibility of urban household to MDMS in the state is far better than all India mark.

**Table – 5: Importance of MDMS for Urban Households across Different Social Groups**

State/Country	% of urban households across different social groups with at least one member benefiting from MDMS (2004-05)				
	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All
Tamil Nadu	22.1	24.2	15.4	3.8	15.6
India	9.0	11.8	10.7	4.8	8.0

**Source:** NSSO 2007C

To find out the importance of MDMS for urban households across different MPCE Classes, percentage of urban households with at least one member benefiting from MDMS is studied from the below table. Responses of urban households at national level shows that around 20% household of bottom 30% of MPCE classes, 7.80% household of middle 40% of MPCE classes and 1.07% household of top 30% of MPCE classes depend on MDMS. The MPCE class-wise figures of Tamil Nadu reveal that nearly two-fifths of households benefiting out of MDMS are from the bottom 30% of MPCE classes.

**Table – 6: Importance of MDMS for Urban Households across Different Consumer Expenditure Classes (2004-05)**

State/Country	% of urban households with at least one member benefiting from MDMS			
	Bottom 30%	Middle 40%	Top 30%	All classes
Tamil Nadu	38.60	16.68	1.33	15.6
India	19.52	7.80	1.07	8.0

Source: NSSO 2007C

#### 4. Integrated Child Development Services

In 1975, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) was launched with the objective of attaining holistic development of children up to six years age also adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating girls by providing package of services which includes supplementary nutrition programme for the target group (MSSRF-WFP 2010). The state has presented a positive picture with 25.2% of children and 37.1% of women have been benefited from an *anganwadi centre* (ANC) in terms of receiving supplementary food service alone during the reference period (NFHS 2007). Table – 7 reveals access of urban households across different social groups with at least one member benefiting from ICDS. It is found out from the table that OBC (3.5%) households in Tamil Nadu are utilizing ICDS in a better way than other social groups of the state. However, at the national level it is the STs who have better reach and access to ICDS. Both at the state and central level, the overall picture is not encouraging as far as utilization of ICDS is concerned as the percentage of beneficiary households were much smaller.

**Table – 7: Importance of ICDS for Urban Households across Different Social Groups**

State/Country	% of urban households across different social groups with at least one member benefiting from ICDS (2004-05)				
	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All
Tamil Nadu	0.0	2.1	3.5	0.8	3.0
India	3.2	2.2	2.3	1.2	1.8

Source: NSSO 2007C

A similar exercise has been undertaken among different MPCE classes to further understand the importance of ICDS for urban households (Table – 8). As expected, all India average for bottom 30% of MPCE classes (3.2%) is better than middle 40% of MPCE classes (1.9%) and top 30% of MPCE classes (0.7%). Also, in case of Tamil Nadu utilization of ICDS is highest among bottom 30% of MPCE classes (4.6%) than other two MPCE classes. Like in the case of social groups, utilization of ICDS among different MPCE classes is also quantitatively less.

**Table – 8: Importance of ICDS for Urban Households across Different Consumer Expenditure Classes (2004-05)**

State/Country	% of urban households with at least one member benefiting from ICDS			
	Bottom 30%	Middle 40%	Top 30%	All classes
Tamil Nadu	4.6	3.4	1.8	3.00
India	3.2	1.9	0.7	1.80

Source: NSSO 2007C

### 5. Major Findings and Conclusion

The study on public food delivery system in urban Tamil Nadu carried out using NSSO data shows that consumption of rice from PDS is highest in bottom 30% of the MPCE classes and on the other hand utilization of wheat is higher among 40% of the MPCE classes in the state. As far as MDMS is concerned, highest numbers of households belonging to SC/STs are utilizing the scheme. And, if the same programme is examined for different MPCE classes, it can be observed that beneficiary households are highest in bottom 30% category of the urban areas. In ICDS, urban beneficiary household is higher among OBCs of the state but the reach and access of the programme is far from satisfactory except the fact that its performance is far better than the country as a whole. It may be noted that the dependency on PFDS to provide food security for urban households by using instruments like PDS, MDMS and IDS is better than all India average. In fact in comparison with other states, Tamil Nadu excels in garnering the benefits from respective programs (MSSRF-WFP 2010). However, there is no denial to the fact that there is room for improvement considering the existence of rampant urban poverty which is pegged down at 22.2% (Census 2011).

To improve the efficacy level, special and conscious effort should be made to improve the reach and access of public food delivery system in urban Tamil Nadu. Creating awareness among the non-responding bottom deciles of the MPCE classes and excluding non-responding top deciles of the MPCE classes from the service area are some of the policy measures to increase the effectiveness of PFDS in urban Tamil Nadu. Further, programme-specific disaggregated research, more

allocation of funds and strengthening local bodies are also needed for effective implementation of food security programmes for the urban households.

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