



INFORMATION NOTE 2



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

WHO EATS THE LAST AND THE LEAST?

Influence of gender norms on food access and consumption within households in Uttar Pradesh, India

Everyday, poor and vulnerable families must make difficult decisions on how to share the food among the members of their households. Prevailing discriminatory social norms lead to unequal distribution of food, often depriving vulnerable groups, such as adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women, of adequate quantity and quality of food to meet their specific requirements, thereby leading to undernutrition, related morbidity, and even excess mortality.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) supports the Government of India in improving the coverage, operational efficiency, and quality of food-based safety nets, particularly the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the PM-POSHAN (school meals) programme in schools, and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) for young children and pregnant and lactating women.

In early 2021, WFP conducted a study in three districts of Uttar Pradesh to explore community practices, knowledge and perception around intra-household food distribution and consumption, food insecurity within households and the impact of

COVID-19 on household food availability and access. This information note summarizes results of household access to food-based safety nets and the effect of COVID-19 on intra-household access to food.

STUDY OBJECTIVES:

1. Map the intra-household pattern/behaviours of food distribution and consumption among the members (women, men, girls, and boys), and how it affects their food security and nutrition.
2. Assess the access to food-based safety nets (TPDS, ICDS, MDM) and their influence on intra-household food access and utilization, especially by women and children.
3. Assess the impact of COVID-19 on intra-household food distribution and food security among vulnerable people and migrant families, comparing with the December 2019 survey results where possible.

SURVEY DETAILS

Partners: WFP and Society for Advancement of Resourceless by Training and Handholding (SAMARTH)

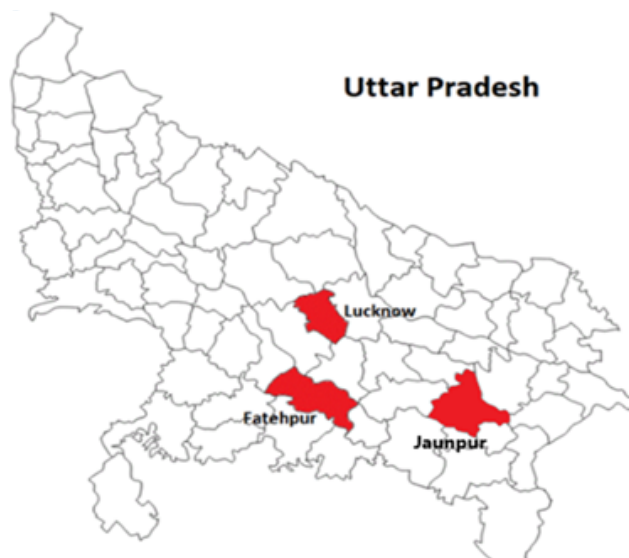
Period of data collection: January-February 2021

Locations surveyed: Fatehpur & Jaunpur (Rural);

Lucknow (Urban poor)

Quantitative: Household survey of 1049 households (700 Rural; 349 Urban)

Qualitative: In-depth interviews (20), Key informant interviews (8), Focus group discussions (12), conducted in 2019 & 2021



TO WHAT EXTENT WERE HOUSEHOLDS ABLE TO ACCESS AND UTILIZE FOOD FROM GOVERNMENT SCHEMES?

- Dependence on markets for food was relatively higher in urban areas.
- The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was also a significant source, with most households having ration cards entitling them to a monthly quota of highly subsidized food grains (wheat and rice).
- Female headed households were less likely to access TPDS as compared to the other vulnerable groups.
- The Government distributed additional grains through the TPDS during the phase of COVID-19 restrictions, from April 2020 onwards, under the Pradhan Mantri Grih Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), particularly benefiting migrant households.
- Challenges in accessing TPDS included technical glitches in confirming beneficiary's identity in the new biometric system, delays in receiving the ration due to slow internet speed, poor quality or insufficient quantity of the rations.

"Nowadays people are getting ration from quota through biometrics in which they face problem as sometimes the biometrics do not match." – Anganwadi Worker, Fatehpur (2019)

- Most households were also benefitting from the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, for supplementary nutrition in the form of Take-Home Rations (THR) for young children and pregnant and lactating women. However, less than a third of the households in Lucknow could avail of it, primarily on account of poor coverage in slum areas and migrant populations.
- Nutritious school meals are provided to children aged 6-14 years under the PM Poshan or the Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme. As schools had shut following the COVID outbreak, MDM was being distributed in the form of THR, but the distribution was not regular. The additional responsibility of providing meals to children increased the food burden on poorer households.

"People who have three to four children, their burden has increased as compared to earlier. Children who were getting one meal at school, now have to eat at home. So, the requirement of food has increased within the household." - FGD4, Jaunpur



EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON HOUSEHOLD INCOMES AND ACCESS TO FOOD

- The positive impact of the TPDS and PMGKAY was perhaps visible when most households report little or no change in current patterns of food consumption as compared to pre-COVID times, though they had suffered reduced food intake when the COVID restrictions had come in place.
- Migrant, urban poor and female-headed households reported greater challenges in accessing food as compared to other households.
- Loss or reduction in incomes following the COVID-19 restrictions was more for men than for women, probably because in most households only the men were working to earn an income. Among female headed households, women or both men and women were affected. Reduction in income was highest among female headed households and urban households.
- Many households recalled days of food insecurity during the initial phase of the COVID restrictions, but they had overcome that phase.

"We did not have money at that time, so we didn't waste a single grain of wheat. We even consumed that leftover ration which we used to give to our domestic animals." – FGD4, Jaunpur

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

The effectiveness of the TPDS as a safety net during the COVID-19 related restrictions has been demonstrated. It is therefore important to ensure coverage of all eligible beneficiaries by the scheme, and other Government food and nutrition programmes.

- Improve coverage of Government food-based safety nets. Government should take prompt action to include all eligible beneficiaries under food safety nets particularly among the vulnerable groups of urban poor and migrants. A special drive could be undertaken among the migrants and urban poor groups to identify and enrol eligible households in TPDS.
- Enhance access of food safety nets through improved monitoring and doorstep delivery. Doorstep delivery of grains and supplementary nutrition can solve many of the service delivery issues that emerged during restrictions due to COVID-19. Supplementary nutrition to women and children under ICDS is particularly important as women were more likely to reduce their food consumption if the household faced food scarcity.

- Address technical issues and improve the quantity and quality of rations. Since the Government food safety net schemes are critical in supplementing food in poor households, it is important to address the technical issues that might hamper access to the scheme, and also enhance the quantity and quality of food to expand the coverage and improve the acceptability and adequacy of the food provided.

संयुक्त राष्ट्र विश्व खाद्य कार्यक्रम (डब्ल्यूएफपी) भारत सरकार को सहयोग देता है, गुडवत्ता आधारित खाद्य सुरक्षा कार्यक्रम के बेहतर कवरेज और परिचालन के लिए, विशेष रूप से लक्षित सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली (टीपीडीएस), पीएम-पोषण (स्कूल भोजन) स्कूलों में खाद्य सुरक्षा कार्यक्रम, और एकीकृत बाल विकास सेवा (आईसीडीएस) के तहत छोटे बच्चों, गर्भवती और स्तनपान कराने वाली महिलाएं के लिए।

2021 की शुरुआत में, WFP ने उत्तर प्रदेश के तीन जिलों में घरेलू खाद्य वितरण और उपभोग, घरेलू खाद्य असुरक्षा, COVID-19 का घरेलू भोजन की उपलब्धता पर प्रभाव और पहुंच के संदर्भ, समुदायिक प्रथाओं, जानकारियों और प्रचलित अवधारणाओं को जानने हेतु एक अध्ययन किया। यह सूचना पत्रक घर के अंदर भोजन के वितरण, खपत एवं उसके व्यक्तिगत खाद्य सुरक्षा और पोषण के साथ जुड़ाव के परिणामों को दर्शाता है।

घरेलू आय और भोजन तक पहुंच पर COVID-19 का प्रभाव

- टीपीडीएस और पीएमजीकेवाई का सकारात्मक प्रभाव तब दिखाई दिया जब अधिकांश परिवार ने कहा कि कोविड से पहले के समय की तुलना में भोजन की खपत के मौजूदा पैटर्न में बहुत कम या कोई बदलाव नहीं पड़ा था, हालाँकि, जब COVID प्रतिबंध लागू हो गए थे, तब उन्हें कम भोजन का सेवन करना पड़ा था।
- प्रवासी, शहरी गरीब और महिला प्रधान परिवारों को भोजन की उपलब्धता सुनिश्चित करने में, अन्य घरों की तुलना में बड़ी चुनौतियों आयी।
- COVID-19 प्रतिबंधों के बाद महिलाएं की तुलना में पुरुषों के की आय में कमी अधिक थी, शायद इसलिए कि ज्यादातर घरों में केवल पुरुष ही आय अर्जित करने के लिए काम कर रहे थे। महिला मुखिया वाले परिवारों में, महिलाएं या पुरुष कुछ में दोनों प्रभावित हुए थे। सबसे अधिक आय में कमी महिला प्रधान परिवारों और शहरी परिवारों की थी।
- कई परिवारों ने COVID के प्रारंभिक चरण के दौरान खाद्य असुरक्षा के दिनों को याद किया, लेकिन उन्होंने उस चरण को पार कर लिया था।

इस विषय में क्या किया जा सकता है?

- COVID-19 संबंधित प्रतिबंधों के दौरान सुरक्षा जाल के रूप में TPDS की सबसे अधिक प्रभावशीलता रही है। इसलिए इस योजना द्वारा सभी पात्र लाभार्थियों का कवरेज सुनिश्चित करना महत्वपूर्ण है, और अन्य सरकारी खाद्य और पोषण कार्यक्रम की भी कवरेज बढ़नी चाहिए।
- सरकारी खाद्य-आधारित सुरक्षा के कवरेज में सुधार करने हेतु सरकार को तुरंत खाद्य सुरक्षा के तहत सभी पात्र लाभार्थियों को विशेष रूप से कमजोर लोगों, शहरी गरीबों और प्रवासियों को शामिल करने की कार्रवाई करनी चाहिए। प्रवासियों और शहरी गरीब समूहों के बीच एक विशेष अभियान चलाया जा सकता है, टीपीडीएस में पात्र परिवारों की पहचान करने और उनका नामांकन करने के लिए।
- बेहतर निगरानी और डोरस्टेप डिलीवरी के माध्यम से खाद्य सुरक्षा की पहुंच बढ़ायी जा सकती है। अनाज और पूरक पोषण की डोरस्टेप डिलीवरी द्वारा उन सभी चुनौतियों का हल किया जा सकता है जो COVID-19 के प्रतिबंधों के दौरान समस्या के रूप उभरी थी। आईसीडीएस के तहत बच्चे और महिलाओं का पूरक पोषण विशेष रूप से महत्वपूर्ण हैं क्योंकि अगर परिवार को भोजन की कमी का सामना करना पड़े, तो महिलाओं द्वारा अपना भोजन कम करने की संभावना अधिक रहती है।
- तकनीकी मुद्दों को हल करना और राशन की मात्रा और गुणवत्ता में सुधार करना। गरीब परिवारों में भोजन के लिए खाद्य सुरक्षा योजनाएं बहुत महत्वपूर्ण हैं, जो योजना तक पहुंच में बाधा उत्पन्न कर सकते हैं ऐसे तकनीकी मुद्दों का समाधान करना महत्वपूर्ण है, और साथ ही भोजन की मात्रा और गुणवत्ता बढ़ाने और स्वीकार्यता और पर्याप्तता में सुधार लाकर कवरेज को और भी बढ़ाने की जरूरत है।

World Food Programme

A, 2, Vasant Vihar Poorvi Marg, Block A,
Vasant Vihar, New Delhi, Delhi 110057

Website: www.wfp.org

Twitter: https://twitter.com/UNWFP_India

Picture Credits
SAMARTH