

# Consultation on Public Finance and Public Policy Agriculture, Food and Nutrition

**Date: 14th, May 2015**  
**Venue: Dy. Chairman Hall,  
Constitution Club of India**



The factors on which the improvement of nutritional status of children depends are – (a) Nutrition status of the woman during pre-conception and during pregnancy, (b) Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices, (c) Dietary Intake of children and lactating mother, and (d) Availability of safe and clean drinking water and sanitation and hygiene facilities. All these are also a factor of the social groups and the income categories of the households to which the children belong.

FLAIR has been carrying out analysis of government budgets and public policy of the Union of India as well as the States in India. The analysis and its interpretation and reporting is a technical process as well as a process that involves people's participation. We have found many areas of concern in the public policy and public finance that need attention of the Government of India.

Towards the objective of the analytical and informed people's voice reaching the government FLAIR has initiated a process of engagement with our elected representatives. It is our elected representatives and the lawmakers, viz. the Members of Parliament who have the authentic access to the process that influences, changes and makes laws and policies and also influence the financial allocation for the different Ministries of Government of India. Therefore, this process of engagement with the Members of Parliament has been initiated and is being institutionalised as a process of dialogue to present the facts and figures from our analysis and also learn and develop greater clarity on issues after listening to our esteemed Members of Parliament. This process is developing mechanisms so that the consultative reports could be reached to various forums within the Parliament and the issues could be brought to the notice of the government for timely attention and timely and adequate remedy.

FLAIR is embarking on this process with the first and priority attention on the issue of Malnutrition of Children.

In this context, a Consultation on Public Finance and Public Policy for Food and Nutrition in India was organized by Forum for Learning and Action (FLAIR) and Save the Children at the Deputy Chairman Hall, Constitution Club, Rafi Marg, New Delhi on 14 May 2015 from 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM. The aim of the consultation was presentation of findings, technical discussion, collation of recommendations and discussion with the Members of Parliament on further proceedings. The presentation was based on the findings of –

- i) **Costing on ICDS in Bihar and Rajasthan** from the publication “Costing and Budget Analysis of National Flagship Programmes (ICDS, SSA and ICPS) for Children – The Union of India and the States of Bihar and Rajasthan (FLAIR and Save the Children)” – **Published**; and
- ii) **Budget for Food and Nutrition Programmes and Agriculture** - The Union of India and the examples of the States of Bihar and Himachal Pradesh - Current Analysis of Budget 2015-16

## RESPONSES/DISCUSSION POINTS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

### I. Presentation on *Costing and Budget analysis of ICDS (joint publication launched by FLAIR and Save the Children)*

- In response to the point presented regarding less spending of budget for training under ICDS and that a huge amount of gap could be calculated in terms of requirement and actual allocation on trainings of personnel under ICDS in the State of Bihar and Rajasthan, participants suggested to look into the central and state compositions individually in State Budgets for different components including training of personnel (AWW, AWH, CDPOs etc). This is necessary as in certain instance, central contributions are found to be less and State had the burden of allocating fund in certain components which most of the states are not capable to, resulting in less allocation of the budget for those components.
- Costing of ICDS as a scheme only and drawing attention of policy makers on resource increments under ICDS only is not going to help in mitigating issue of malnutrition in India. ICDS is only a supplementary feeding programme which does not extensively focus on child feeding and care practices, neither place specific measures to cater to SAM and moderately malnourished children under 2 years of age. There is a need of complete restructuring of the present ICDS scheme to address issues of under nutrition in the country. Focusing only on the present interventions under ICDS and appealing policy makers to increase fund allocation in these present interventions is not going to help
- Which has to be prioritized more? Whether the policy maker’s attention has to be drawn on the fact that there is a gap between allocation and spending or the fact that resource allocation has to be increased as per the requirement as calculated in the study? At the present situation, the policy makers are to be urged to spend the allocated resources optimally and take necessary measures to monitor and evaluate effective spending on the present interventions in every schemes. Once the mechanism of monitoring effective spending is in place, we can urge for the increase in resource allocation as per requirements calculated in each component under ICDS. It was also observed that many times the spending percentage is less also because the allocations are not adequate and appropriate, e.g. if the allocations to fill the human resources are inadequate the it will result in less and delayed expenditure.

II. Presentation on Budget for ***Food and Nutrition Programmes and Agriculture - The Union of India and the examples of the States of Bihar and Himachal Pradesh (Analysis of Union and State Budget for FY2015-16)***

- The presentation pointed out differences in Union budget allocation between FY2014-15 and FY2015-16 on important nutrition related schemes. On one hand, decline in Union Budget was owing to the Fourteenth Finance Commission Award of devaluating increased tax resources to the states. On the other hand, decline in Union Budget on important schemes are to be made up by the States from their enhanced resources, as directed by the FFC. However, we could calculated that a number of nutrition schemes(direct and indirect)in Bihar marked decrease in allocations between FY2014-15 and FY2015-16, whereas Himachal Pradesh showed meagre increase in allocation nutrition schemes.
- In response to the point that National Food Security Mission is an important mission ensuring food security in India and both the states showed decrease in allocation in present budget from last year's revised estimates, Dr. Sheila Vir informed that in Himachal Pradesh there has been a policy shift towards implementing NFSM from year 2015 which is reflecting in reduction in budget for the scheme.
- Participants questioned about the difference between the operational definition of Food and Nutrition Programs and FNS. On what basis the programmes are being categorized under Food Programs and FNS programs, as there should be a clear definition before segregating the schemes and appealing for better grants.
- The budget for Food Subsidy in India has been increasing over the years and that, among the direct nutrition schemes<sup>1</sup>, Food Subsidy constitutes the maximum share (about 87.2 percent). In response to this, participants came out with questions about the ratio between budget for Food Subsidy and improvement in nutrition status of children in India. What has been the impact of these food subsidies in reality, in what manner these subsidies are used and to what extent families (including women and children) are benefitted?
- A suggestion from Mr. Suman Chakraborti, IFPRI, was not to put all the programmes under the bucket of nutrition programs that do not have any empirically proven indicators impacting malnutrition. However, to have an overall idea on how much are approximately going for nutrition related programmes, these direct and indirect nutrition schemes are to be considered, but to come to a final conclusion with recommendation on fund requirement for nutrition

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<sup>1</sup> Direct nutrition programs: ICDS, MDM, SABLA, NNM, Nutrition Education Scheme, NIPCCD, NRHM and Food Subsidy

programmes, there is a need for empirical research on nutrition interventions to find out what components are directly impacting nutrition and costing associated with it.

- Direct nutrition interventions are not only giving food in subsidized manner or distributing grains/foods etc, it is all about feeding the child. It is also about reducing chances of infectious diseases among children through specific measures of providing safe environment and food hygiene, better sanitations and so on. We have to come with recommendations such as, do we need to redesign the entire health system that can make difference in improving child nutrition as well as reducing infections etc.
- Suggestions came from the group to take up a comparative study on two states implementing NFSA and two states that are not implementing NFSA to get idea on overall impact of the Act on nutritional status.

## DISCUSSION WITH MPS

- Question raised by Rashmi, IFPRI, New Delhi to Shri Oscar Fernandes regarding implementation status of various government programmes/schemes related to nutrition. There is lack of information on the part of the Government on how various schemes meant for children under 5 years of ages are implementing, what is the status of access, infrastructure, what are the implications of these schemes. Data are not made public and whatever recorded in different website are incoherent making it difficult for the researchers to analyse schemes in details, or come with alternative costing upto the requirement of targeted population.
- The MP claimed that data are being published time to time and they are even available internationally.
- One question came from Dr. Sheila Vir that government is still running the same scheme ICDS since its inception in 1975, without revising or restructuring its components/interventions. There has rarely been any policy reform on the schemes running since many years, though some of the schemes that were relevant 20 years ago may not be relevant now and needs restructuring to cope with the present situation in addressing under nutrition in the country. One of the participants working at the service delivery level pointed out that schemes benefitting marginalized section of population are limited out of which mostly are on only paper and do not reach the targeted groups. Distributing 5 kgs of grains (rice and wheat) per family are not sufficient and on top of that they are not reaching the targeted population on regular basis.

Some of the responses from the MP were,

- A parallel system is required in India to compensate nutrition requirements among poor families. A parallel system in India therefore might be in terms of sustainable livelihood programmes.
- SELF SUSTAINED villages can itself take care of improving nutrition of households and overall population in the country. An example may be self-sustained farming by individuals in villages to satisfy need of food among household and selling the rest in the markets.
- There can be demand for setting up separate department to take care of only distribution of food.
- Revisiting and restructuring of existing nutrition related schemes is required to cope with present situation of under nutrition in the country.
- A major reason of maternal death and still born babies in India, especially in rural India has been non-institutional deliveries. This is not only because of poor health care system, lack of human resources in PHCs etc. but also because of poor access to PHCs, poor road condition in remote areas and poor transportation for which most of the deliveries has been non-institutional aggravating maternal death during deliveries. Traditional paradigm shift has not yet happened in many parts of India.
- With an aim to improve livelihood in un-organized sector in India, land has been distributed by the government to agricultural laborer, as part of Land Reform, for self-sustained farming which satisfies the need for food.
- Role of PRIs are very weak and confusing and therefore they are inactive whereas they had to play the most important role towards implementation of any scheme at ground level. Need to come up with long term strategies in terms of incentives and specific programmes.
- There has to be concrete plans on how to constructively engage with the policy makers. Justifications are already provided by the government on what is now being allocated and what is being spent. What we need to do is to monitor these allocation and utilization figures carefully and plan measures for proper advocacy as it is evident that central plans of fund devolution to the states is not working. Then what may actually be done on the part of government so that effective implementation of these schemes is ensured at the state level. Need to come up with specific recommendation to the government on this.
- Centrally Sponsored Schemes are neither responsibility of central government nor the state governments. It is responsibility of the PRIs and Community. In the report published by FLAIR and Save the Children as well as in the working paper on budget for food and nutrition programme, there is no mention of role of PRI or role played by SMC under SSA. We need to go back to the Rajiv Gandhi era where his idea has been that primary responsibility for implementing centrally sponsored schemes including food and nutrition programs are to be given to the communities. Schemes are to be taken to the grassroots for effective implementation and reach out the targeted groups in true sense.

- Activity mapping of government programmes should be in the priority list of civil society organizations today and need to factor in on how to improve implementation putting responsibility to the local communities.

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