

Chapter 2

Poverty and Food Security in India

- Poverty is a very relative concept. The accepted definition of the poor in India is the people who cannot afford food enough to provide a minimum of 2400 calories per person for the rural and 2100 calories per person for the urban population. In terms of money persons spending below Rs. 32 per day in urban areas and Rs. 26 per day in rural areas are classified as living below the poverty line.
- Poverty is caused by two factors. The overall economic development could be low or distribution of national income may be unequal.
- India's rate of economic growth has been slow. Prices have been rising consistently.
- Agriculture employs the large majority of our population and in this sector, the productivity is low and employment both seasonal as well as partial.
- Worker's skills are low and hence even industrial productivity is low. A number of social and religious factors add to the problems of the already poor people.
- Over 40% of national income is owned by just 20% of the people. This gives some idea of unequal distribution of national income. Seventy five business families control among them over one thousand five hundred companies.
- Some measures suggested for poverty alleviation are population control, development of agriculture, more efficient production techniques, progressive taxation with strict compliance, and a national social security scheme.
- TRYSEM, RLEGS, Minimum Needs Programme, Jawahar Rozgar Yojna Employment assurance Scheme are some government sponsored measures to remove poverty.
- The worst thing about poverty in India is that concessions and facilities meant for the poor and vulnerable sections of the society barely reach them.
- Food security ensures that the total population gets nutritionally adequate supply of food at all times.
- The per capita availability of foodgrains has increased considerably except in respect of pulses.
- Famines as such are now an event of history, however, high levels of starvation continue in certain pockets due to lack of purchasing power.
- The country now produces enough foodgrains to meet the needs of country's population having implemented measures to increase productivity through better supply of high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers and irrigation facilities.
- The government has been maintaining buffer stocks of foodgrains through procurement at harvest times. These are released through a public distribution system to counteract any unusual rise in price during periods of shortages.
- While the idea of PDS is well conceived its execution remains faulty. The very poor consumers for whom the whole system is supposed to work do not get full benefit of the scheme.
- Food for work programmes is launched in scarcity in areas to ameliorate the conditions of unemployed poor people especially in rural areas.

Important Terms

- **Black Money** : That part of money in circulation which remains outside the domains of taxation.
- **Capital Intensive** : Economic ventures that need large scale capital investments.
- **Marginal Farmer** : The peasant who grows just enough to meet his family needs without any surplus for sale in the market.
- **Opportunity Costs** : The loss of earnings that could have been made if the child had worked instead of going to school.
- **Buffer Stocks** : Stocks of foodgrains maintained by state agencies to be released in case of inadequate market supplies.
- **Famine** : State of food scarcity often leading to starvation and deaths.
- **Kiosk** : A small roofed stall.
- **Subsidy** : Sum of money given by government to keep prices low.
- **Support Price** : Minimum price offered by government to ensure that purchase prices do not crash due to greater supply.

Exercise

1

Directions : This section contains multiple choice questions. Each question has 4 choices (1), (2), (3) and (4) out of which only one is correct.

1. What do you understand by Social Exclusion?
 - (1) It is a process through which individuals or groups are excluded from facilities, benefits and opportunities that others enjoy
 - (2) It is a process through which every individual is given a sense of security
 - (3) It is a process through which a group can be determined 'untouchables'
 - (4) None of them
2. What is vulnerability to poverty?
 - (1) An option, which enhances poverty among individuals or groups
 - (2) A measure, which describes the greater probability of certain communities or individuals of becoming, or remaining poor in the coming years
 - (3) A catalyst, which reduces the affect of poverty on people
 - (4) None of them
3. When is a person considered poor?
 - (1) If his/her income or consumption level falls below a given "minimum level" necessary to fulfil basic needs
 - (2) If his/her all needs are fulfilled in a fraction of seconds without any delay
 - (3) If his/her desires are taken into consideration by their boss after considering all other desires
 - (4) All of them
4. In rural areas, the accepted average calorie requirement per person per day is and in urban areas it is
 - (1) 2400; 2100 (2) 2300; 2354
 - (3) 3400; 3833 (4) 1200; 2323
5. What does NSSO stand for?
 - (1) National Sample Survey Organization
 - (2) National Surety Sect Organization
 - (3) National Security System Organization
 - (4) National Sympathy Society Organization
6. What does poverty mean?
 - (1) Hunger and lack of shelter
 - (2) Lack of clean water and sanitation facilities
 - (3) Lack of a regular job at a minimum decent level
 - (4) All of them
7. Which states are the poorest with poverty ratios of 47% and 43% respectively?
 - (1) Kerela; J&K (2) Orissa; Bihar
 - (3) Assam; Tripura (4) UP; Bihar
8. What is the historical reason for poverty in India?
 - (1) Low level of economic development under the British colonial administration
 - (2) Indian rulers were very clumsy
 - (3) India was born poor
 - (4) All of them
9. What are policy initiatives like land reforms aimed at?
 - (1) Redistribution of assets in rural areas
 - (2) Allotment of all land of father to son
 - (3) Making every piece of land green
 - (4) None of them
10. What is the current anti-society strategy of the government based on?
 - (1) Promotion of economic growth
 - (2) Targeted anti-poverty programmes
 - (3) Both 'a' and 'b'
 - (4) None of them
11. What do you mean by NREGA?
 - (1) National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
 - (2) Non-rural Employment Guarantee Act
 - (3) Nonsense Report Ensuring Guarantee Act
 - (4) None of them
12. Which one is relevant to NFWP?
 - (1) This programme is implemented as a 100% centrally sponsored scheme and food grains are provided free of cost.
 - (2) The programme is open to all rural poor who are in need of wage employment and desire to do manual unskilled work.
 - (3) Launched in 150 most backward districts.
 - (4) All of them
13. What does AAY stand for?
 - (1) Anti Allergic Yojana
 - (2) Antyodaya Anna Yozana
 - (3) All Anna Yozana
 - (4) None of them
14. What do you mean by Food Security?
 - (1) It means availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times
 - (2) It means continuous growing of food throughout the year
 - (3) It means irrigating food crops from time to time
 - (4) None of them
15. What is the full form of NHFS?
 - (1) National Health and Family Survey
 - (2) Non-health First Show
 - (3) North High Foreign School
 - (4) None of them
16. What is the full form of MSP?
 - (1) Minimum Support Price
 - (2) Maximum Support Price
 - (3) Max Sort Part
 - (4) Multimedia System Parts
17. What do you mean by Chronic Hunger?
 - (1) Cycles of food growing and harvesting
 - (2) A consequence of diets persistently inadequate in terms of quantity and/or quality
 - (3) Resolution for shortage of food during adverse weather conditions
 - (4) All of them

18. Why is Seasonal Hunger prevalent in rural areas?
- Because people with low income are unable to buy food even for survival
 - Because of seasonal nature of agricultural activities
 - Because green revolution took place immediately after the spread of seasonal hunger
 - All of them
19. What do you mean by PDS?
- Post Development Services
 - Public Distribution System
 - Pre-domain Shipment
 - None of them
20. What is Buffer Stock?
- It is the stock of food grains, namely wheat and rice procured by the government through Food Corporation of India
 - Distribution of stock among the poorer strata of society
 - Ration shops
 - All of them
21. Which among the following is/are the kinds of Ration cards?
- Antyodaya cards for the poorest of the poor
 - BPL cards for those below poverty line
 - APL cards for all others
 - All of them
22. In the wake of the high incidence of poverty levels as reported by the NSSO in the mid 1970's, which important food intervention programme(s) was / were introduced?
- PDS
 - ICDS
 - FFW
 - AAY
- Code:-**
- (i) and (ii)
 - (iii) and (iv)
 - (i), (ii) and (iii)
 - All of them
23. What do you mean by 'Subsidy'?
- It is a payment that the government makes to a producer to supplement the market price of a commodity
 - It is a tax imposed by people on untouchables in order to live in the society peacefully
 - It is a special poverty alleviation programme
 - None of them
24. What kind of malpractices are done by the PDS dealers?
- Diverting the grains to open market to get better margin
 - Selling poor quality grains at ration shops
 - Irregular agency of the shops
 - All of them
25. What is the other name for Ration shops?
- Fair price shops
 - Grocery shops
 - Sanitary shops
 - None of them

Exercise

2

Matching Based MCQ

DIRECTIONS (Qs. 1 to 3) : Match Column-I with Column-II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the columns.

- 1.
- | Column-I | Column-II |
|----------|---|
| (A) 1993 | (p) Rural Employment Generation Programme |
| (B) 1995 | (q) National Food for work Programme |
| (C) 1999 | (r) Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojna |
| (D) 2004 | (s) Prime minister Rozgar Yojna |
- A → (r); B → (q); C → (s); D → (p)
 - A → (p); B → (s); C → (q); D → (r)
 - A → (s); B → (p); C → (r); D → (q)
 - A → (q); B → (r); C → (s); D → (p)
- 2.
- | Column-I | Column-II |
|----------|------------------------------|
| (A) PDS | (p) Poor and non - poor |
| (B) TPDS | (q) Indigent Senior citizens |
| (C) AAY | (r) Universal |
| (D) APS | (s) Poorest of the poor. |
- A → (s); B → (r); C → (p); D → (q)
 - A → (q); B → (s); C → (r); D → (p)
 - A → (p); B → (q); C → (s); D → (r)
 - A → (r); B → (p); C → (s); D → (q)

- 3.
- | Column-I | Column-II |
|---------------------------|--|
| (A) Subsidy | (p) calamity |
| (B) Famine | (q) Pre-announced price for surplus production |
| (C) Minimum support Price | (r) Supplement of high price commodity |
| (D) Issue Price | (s) Buffer stock, lower than the market price |
- A → (s); B → (p); C → (r); D → (q)
 - A → (q); B → (r); C → (p); D → (s)
 - A → (r); B → (p); C → (q); D → (s)
 - A → (p); B → (s); C → (r); D → (q)

Statement Based MCQ

4. Consider the following statements :
- The food procured by the FCI is distributed among the poorer section of the society.
 - Ration shops are known as Fair Price shops.
 - There are less than 1 lakh ration shops all over the country.
 - Any Indian citizen can buy foodgrains from the ration shops.
- Which of the above statements are correct ?
- (a), (c) and (d)
 - (a) and (b)
 - (b) and (c)
 - (a), (b) and (d)

5. Consider the following statements:
- National Food for Work programme was launched in 2011.
 - It is implemented in the backward districts of the country.
 - It gives employment to annual unskilled workers.
 - The collector is responsible for planning implementation, coordination and supervision of the programme.

Which of the above statements are correct ?

- (b), (c) and (d)
- (b) and (c)
- (a), (b) and (c)
- (a) and (d)

6. Consider the following statements:

- Low level of economic development under the colonial regime is a major cause of poverty.
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act provides 100 days assured employment every year.
- Green Revolution affected every part of the country.
- PMRY aims at creating self employment opportunities for educated unemployed youth in small towns.

Which of the above statements are correct ?

- (a), (b) and (c)
- (b), (c) and (d)
- (b) and (c)
- All of the above

7. Consider the following statements:-

- Antyodaya Anna Yojna was launched in December 2000.
- It covered one crore of the BPL families.
- Five kilograms of foodgrains were made available to the BPL families.
- Highly subsidized rate of Rs 2 per kg. for wheat and Rs. 3 per kg for rice has been fixed under this scheme.

Which of the above statements are correct ?

- (a), (b) and (d)
- (b) and (d)
- (b), (c) and (d)
- (a) and (c)

8. Consider the following statements:-

- Food security means availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people -
- Famine causes starvation.
- Social composition of the society does not play any role in food insecurity.
- Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Tamilnadu account for largest number of food insecure people.

Which of the above statements are correct ?

- (a), (c) and (d)
- (a) and (b)
- (b) and (c)
- (b) and (d)

Passage Based MCQ

DIRECTIONS (Qs. 9 to 14) : Read the passage(s) given below and answer the questions that follow.

PASSAGE - 1

Thirty three years old Ram Saran works as a daily wage labourer in a wheat flour mill near Ranchi in Jharkhand. He manages to earn around ₹ 1500 a month when he finds employment. This family of six - that includes his wife and four children aged between 12 years to six months his father a landless labourer, depends on Ram saran and his brother who lives in Hazaribagh. His wife Santa Devi works as a maid and earn ₹ 800/- his elder son earn ₹ 300/- in a tea shop.

9. Where does Ram Saran work ?

- Flour mill
- Textile mill
- Fertilizer mill
- Tea shop

10. How many members are there in Ram Saran's home ?

- 6
- 4
- 2
- 8

11. What is the total income of Ram Saran's brother's wife and son ?

- ₹ 1000
- ₹ 800
- ₹ 300
- ₹ 1100

PASSAGE - 2

In the 1970s, food security was understood as the availability at all times of adequate supply of basic food stuffs. Amartya Sen added a new dimension to food security and emphasised the access to food through what he called entitlements – a combination of what one can produce, exchange in the market along with state. India has become self sufficient in foodgrains during the last 30 years because of a variety of crops grown all over the country. The food procured by the FCI is distributed through government regulated ration shops among the poorer section of the society. This is called the public distribution system.

12. Who emphasized on entitlement ?

- Vinoba Bhave
- Rabindranath Tagore
- Amartya Sen
- Jawaharlal Nehru

13. What is FCI ?

- Famine corporation of India
- Food corporation of India
- Flood corporation of India
- Fair corporation of India

14. The distribution of food to the poor by FCI is called –

- BPL
- PDS
- ADS
- Buffer stock

Assertion Reason Based MCQ

DIRECTIONS (Qs. 15 to 17) : Following questions consist of two statements, one labelled as the 'Assertion' and the other as 'Reason'. You are to examine these two statements carefully and select the answer to these items using the code given below.

Codes :

- Both A and R are individually true and R is the correct explanation of A.
- Both A and R are individually true but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- A is true but R is false.
- A is false but R is true.

15. **Assertion :** Calamity leads to shortage of foodgrains

Reason : Due to a natural calamity, total production of foodgrains decreases which creates shortage of food in affected areas.

16. **Assertion :** The proportion of people below poverty line is same for all social groups.

Reason : The present formula for food requirement is based on the desired calorie requirement.

17. **Assertion :** Poverty reduction is expected to decrease in the period of 10 - 15 years.

Reason : Due to different kinds of measures to eradicate poverty, economic growth is increasing and population growth is declining.

Feature Based MCQ

18. On the basis of following features, identify the correct option.
- (I) It was launched in December 2000.
 - (II) Under the scheme one crore of the poorest among the BPL families covered under the targeted PDS were identified.
 - (III) Poor families were identified by the respective state rural developments through a BPL survey.
 - (IV) In 2004, 2 crore families have been covered under this scheme.
- (1) Antyodaya Anna Yojna
 - (2) National Food for Work programme
 - (3) Poverty Alleviation programme
 - (4) Targeted Public Distribution Systems.
19. On the basis of following features, identify the correct option.
- (I) It is a measure of poverty which describes the greater probability of certain communities.
 - (II) It is analysed on the basis of the greater risks these groups face at the time of Natural disasters.
 - (III) It describes the greater probability of being more adversely affected than other people.
 - (IV) Scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and rural agricultural labours come under this group.
- (1) Social exclusion
 - (2) Vulnerability
 - (3) Food security
 - (4) Calamity

Hints & SOLUTIONS

Exercise 1

1. (1) Social exclusion may lead to more damage than having a very low income.
2. (2) Vulnerability is analyzed on the basis of greater risks these groups face at the time of natural disasters, terrorism etc.
3. (1) "Minimum level" is described by the poverty line which decides who is poor and who is not.
4. (1) Since people living in rural areas engage themselves more in physical activities, calorie requirements in rural areas are considered to be higher than urban areas.
5. (1) All surveys are conducted by NSSO.
6. (4) Poverty means living with a sense of helplessness.
7. (2) Along with rural poverty, urban poverty is also high in Orissa, MP, Bihar and UP.
8. (1) The policies of the colonial government ruined traditional handicrafts and discouraged development of industries like textiles.
9. (1) Policies were made but were not implemented properly.
10. (3) Removal of poverty has been one of the major objectives of Indian development strategies.
11. (1) NREGA was passed in September 2005.
12. (4) NWFP stands for National Food for Work Programme.
13. (2) AAY is a poverty alleviation programme.
14. (1) The poor households are more vulnerable to food insecurity whenever there is a problem of production or distribution of food crops.
15. (1) According to NHFS 1998-99, the number of such women and children is approximately 11 crores.
16. (1) MSP is decided by the government of India.
17. (2) Chronic hunger is most prominent among poor people because they earn a very low income and are even unable to buy food for survival.
18. (2) In urban areas seasonal hunger is prevalent mainly because of the casual labour.
19. (2) PDS helps in ensuring food security for poor.
20. (1) The FCI purchases wheat and rice from the farmers in states where there is surplus production, which is kept as a stock and is called Buffer stock.
21. (4) Ration cards are of three kinds namely Antyodaya cards for the poorest of the poor, Below Poverty Line cards (BPL) for those who are counted below poverty line and APL cards for all others.
22. (3) In the wake of the high incidence of poverty levels as reported by the NSSO in the mid 1970's, PDS, ICDS and FFW were introduced. ICDS was introduced in 1975 on an experimental basis. FFW was introduced in 1977-78.
23. (1) Subsidies can keep consumer prices low while maintaining a higher income for domestic produces.
24. (4) Because of the malpractices it is common to find that ration shops regularly have unsold stocks of poor quality grains left.
25. (1) Ration shops keep stock of food grain, sugar, oil etc and give goods at the issue price to the people below the poverty line.

Exercise 2

1. (3)
2. (4)
3. (3)
4. (2)
5. (1) National food for work programme was launched in 2004 in 150 most backward districts of the country. It is open to all rural people who desire to do manual unskilled work.
6. (4)
7. (1)
8. (2)
9. (1)
10. (4)
11. (1)
12. (1)
13. (1)
14. (4)
15. (3) Due to famine, total production of food grains decreases. It creates a shortage of food in the affected areas. Due to shortage of food, the prices go up and some people cannot afford it which leads to starvation.
16. (2) The proportion of people below poverty line is different for all social groups.
17. (2)
18. (1)
19. (2)